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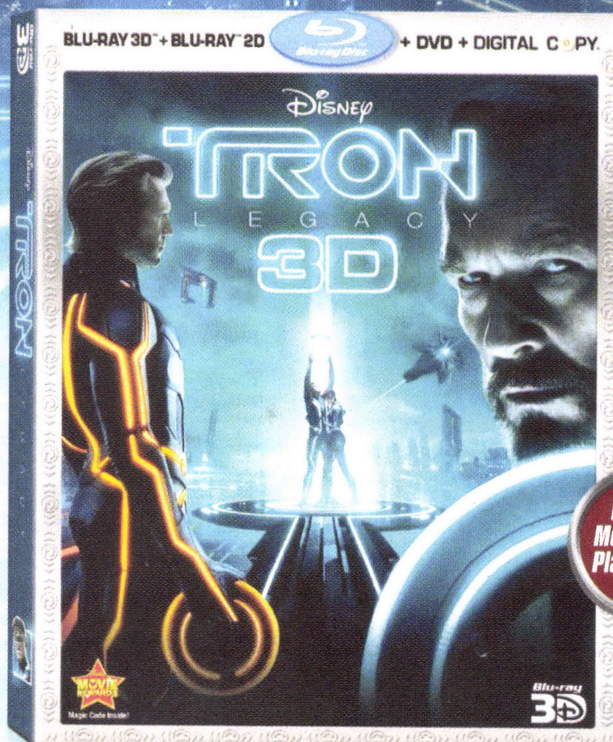




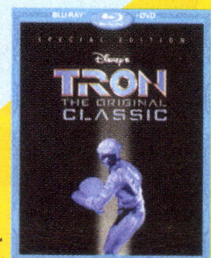
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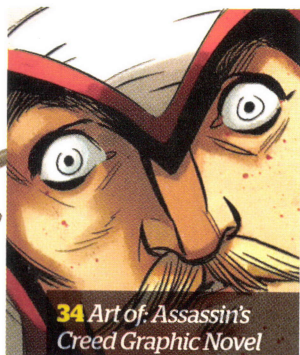
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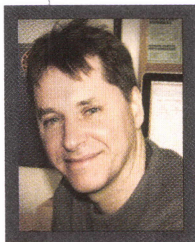
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## THE UBIQUITY OF GAMES

Someone asked me the other day if I was playing fewer games than I used to as I get older? I thought about it and said yes. And then I thought some more and said no. Because initially, I simply thought about how I used to play games compared to how I play now: I used to spend hours and hours sitting in front of the TV with a joystick in my hand, but I simply don't do that as much anymore—which my stupid logic deduced as “I guess I game less, then.” But fortunately, the rest of my brain kicked in and told me my logic was totally stupid and I need to actually think harder before answering. Because the reality is, I play more now than ever before.

I still play in front of my TV, for sure. But that's only a small part of the story. Thanks to DVR and on-demand, Netflix, and everything else I use, my TV consumption is as efficient as it ever has been. Ads? What are they? I watch what I want, when I want, and as soon as what I want is over, I'm on to the next thing. That might be heading to my office for some hours with *World of Warcraft* or *Rift*. Or I might pop something into the PS3 or Xbox 360 for some console-style gaming. Or I grab my iPad, which as time goes on and its games just keep getting better and better, seems to be my favorite gaming platform.

And that's just at home.

When I'm out, it's like gaming heaven. Shopping experiences with the girlfriend that used to be a foot-tapping fest of awkward standing-around-waiting are now “take as long as you like, honey” because I can whip out my iPhone for some mobile gaming. Sure, I used to be able to do that with a Game Boy, but schlepping around with a bunch of carts in a bag made me feel like an idiot. The sheer speed of the on-and-offness, insta-saving of mobile gaming these days makes squeezing in a few minutes of play so incredibly easy, it's upped my gaming time exponentially. I'm even getting in a few moves on my favorite turn-based iPhone strategy game between the garage level and the fifth floor of *GamePro* Towers every morning.

We're living in a time when gaming is all around us, and it's pretty much on-demand from almost every outlet you can think of. Sure, sometimes life makes it difficult to squeeze in the time you might want to devote to gaming. But the reality is, if you're a gamer, there's a machine out there where you can get your gaming kicks in at a time and a place that's convenient for you. All you need to do is find your platform of choice, and games are there for you.

Awesome.

See you next month.

**Jaz Rignall**  
VP, Content

# GAMEPRO

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# BEHIND THE Staff



**Jaz Rignall**  
**VP, Content**  
*LittleBigPlanet 2* has been sucking up an enormous

amount of my time: I wish I had the time to go full-on with the editor, but unfortunately, I don't because I'm spending way too much time in *Rift*, which is rapidly becoming my favorite MMO. Sure, *World of Warcraft* is still in the background, but *Rift* is offering so much new and entertaining stuff that *WOW* seems a little played out by comparison.

**Now playing:** *LittleBigPlanet 2*, *Rift*, *World of Warcraft: Cataclysm*

**Twitter:** @jazrignall



**Karen Chu**  
**Art Director**  
Karen's last name literally translates to "vermillion,"

but unfortunately, it's a homophone for "pig."

**Now playing:** *GeoDefense DLC*, *WOW: Cataclysm*, *Diner Dash Facebook*

**Twitter:** @momopeche



**Jason Wilson**  
**Group Managing Editor**  
Some think *Dead Space 2* isn't scary, but

don't tell that to Jason; he nearly wet himself as he explored the game's first level. Of course, he might find it scary because he's playing on a PC, with the screen in his face and a set of surround-sound headphones on his melon.

**Now playing:** *Battlestar Galactica Online*, *Civilization V* (of course), *Dead Space 2* (PC), *Dungeons*, *The First Templar*, *Magicka*, *Rift*, *Two Worlds II*,

*Persona 3 PSP*, *Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics*, *Pinochle* (iOS)

**Twitter:** @jason\_wilson



**Tom Price**  
**Executive Editor**  
After 12 years in the industry, Tom has finally landed on the

doorstep of *GamePro*, stuffed in a basket and wailing his head off. As the newest and oldest staff member (except Jaz, he hopes), Tom is looking forward to showing these snotty punks his elite *Asteroid* and *Qix* skills just as soon as he can figure out what all these extra buttons on those fancy controllers are for. He's still grinding through levels in *Gran Turismo 5*, though he did recently finish *Dead Space 2*, somehow keeping his eyes closed throughout.

**Now playing:** *Gran Turismo 5*, *Corporation Inc.*, *Angry Birds*

**Twitter:** @Tomelet



**Tae K. Kim**  
**Senior Editor**  
By the time you pick up this issue, Tae will have logged

a lot of hours into the *Dead Space 2* multiplayer mode and have killed a lot of enemies using the gray screech baby. He's also confident that he will be gearing up for the San Jose Sharks' Stanley Cup run.

**Now playing:** *Fruit Ninja*, *Dead Space 2* (Xbox 360), *Call of Duty: Black Ops* (Xbox 360), *Assassin's Creed II* (PS3)

**Twitter:** @taelurkim



**Patrick Shaw**  
**Senior Editor**  
Inspired by TV shows like *Auction Hunters* and

*Storage Wars*, Patrick hopes to enter the competitive world of bidding on abandoned public storage units soon. Though, he hasn't quite perfected his bidding call "yip" yet.

**Now playing:** *Dead Space 2*, *Dead Nation* (PSN), *Netflix Random Movie Roulette*, *LittleBigPlanet 2*

**Twitter:** @patrickshaw



**Andy Burt**  
**Assistant Editor**  
After ignoring his consoles for a little while in favor of some

short-spurt iPhone gaming, Andy's returned due to the recent influx of awesome games like *Dead Space 2*, *Ilomilo*, and *Bulletstorm*. His new, weird addiction is Trader Joe's instant Columbian coffee, which he claims is just as good as the real thing.

**Now playing:** *Bulletstorm*, *Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective*, *Dead Space 2*

**Twitter:** @Andy\_Burt



**AJ Glasser**  
**News Editor**  
AJ recently rediscovered the joys of commute gaming

on a 50-minute BART ride with *Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective*. She still thinks *Professor Layton* is the better series, but *Mask of Miracles* is a ways off, so it'll have to do.

**Now playing:** *Cityville*, *DC Universe Online*, *The Sims 3*

**Twitter:** @Joygirl007



**Will Herring**  
**Reviews Editor**  
In preparation for *Human Revolution*, Will is revisiting

*Deus Ex* for the first time in a decade.

He now realizes how pampered he's become after years of checkpoints and autosaves and is very close to breaking off his "quick save" key.

**Now playing:** *Deus Ex*, *Super Meat Boy*, *DC Universe Online*

**Twitter:** @gp\_greyscale



**Dave Rudden**  
**Associate Editor**  
By the time you read this, Dave's and Will

Herring's new Internet radio show, *The GameProCast*, should be getting into the swing of things. Unless it gets canceled after one episode. If that happens, we'll blame it on the Ted McGinley cameo in the pilot.

**Now playing:** *Stacking*, *Pac-Man Championship Edition: DX*, *Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective*, *The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks*, *Dead Space: Extraction* (PS3)

**Twitter:** @daverudden



**Andrew Yang**  
**Senior Graphic Designer**  
Andrew spent this month trying to design

the magazine using only the create tools in *LittleBigPlanet 2*. He gave up after realizing the "light on fire" tool was more satisfying when done in real life.

**Now playing:** *LittleBigPlanet 2*, *Dead Space 2*

**Twitter:** @stitchmind



**William Chu**  
**Graphic Designer**  
Will's working on a line of silkscreen post-

ers that'll hopefully be up for sale by the end of this month. He's also spending his nights grinding on developing for the iPad so he can make his ridiculous ideas come true.

**Now playing:** *LittleBigPlanet 2*, *Monster Hunter Tri*, *Super Street Fighter IV*

**Twitter:** @ashjaw



## Q of the MONTH

In the pages of *GamePro*, you'll often find us asking questions of some of the biggest movers and shakers in the video games industry. But we thought it was time to let the people we grill each month take a stab at asking us something. Eat Sleep Play's **David Jaffe**, one of the fathers of the *God of War* and *Twisted Metal* franchises (and featured in this month's cover story), asks us:

**What do developers and publishers do that causes the most long-term damage to the health of the video-game medium—from both a sales and a creative standpoint?**

**Patrick Shaw, senior editor:**

Sequels to high-profile games will always be in abundance, but succumbing to the pressure of only developing games that appeal to the greater masses can hurt gamers in a few ways. With the exception of *Dead Space 2*, which also emphasizes action over terror, the survival-horror genre in particular has sucked lately because of this big shift in placing too much importance on the multiplayer experience and not enough on crafting a great single-player game.

**Tom Price, executive editor:** They conversely release not enough and too much info about upcoming games sometimes. On the one hand, you'll never see an actual in-game screenshot from certain franchises—I'm looking at you, *Madden*. That's kind of like lying. On the other hand, with the drive to build communities around titles—a good thing, ultimately—some games get revealed down to the studs and when you actually play them, there are very few surprises: Whet our appetites, yes, but leave us hungry for the big meal itself.

**Jason Wilson, group managing editor:** Publishers and developers do more damage to the medium by churning out sequels of blockbuster franchises, oversaturating the market with one particular genre, and changing their formula to lure mainstream gamers—they damage gaming by playing it safe instead of taking risks, being inventive, and trying something new.

## COME ONE, COME ALL!

Humans are weird. Most of us enjoy that hair-raising tingle we get when witnessing dangerous feats. For the cover, we injected *Twisted Metal* art (created by Senior Production Artist Owen Richardson) with an old-timey circus-freak theme. Clowns, cars, creepiness, and chaos—it's going to be one helluva show.



**OWEN  
RICHARDSON**



## EVENT CALENDAR

3/1/11



3/22/11



3/6/11



3/15/11



3/25/11



3/31/11

## MARCH 2011

In a month loaded with blockbuster game releases, we "March" into an MMO debut, a slew of new Pokémon, the Free Marches of *Dragon Age 2*, a fight in *Crysis 2*'s New York, the Masters, and the invasion of the U.S. by... North Korea?

Release dates are subject to change.

3/1/11

# GDC

It's a good day to be a

PC gamer: *Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War II—Retribution*, the latest entry in Relic's standout real-time strategy series, and Trion Worlds' PC MMO *Rift* launch today. The Game Developers Conference continues today through March 4 (check GamePro.com for complete show coverage). *The Pirates of the Caribbean* series hits Blu-ray as well today.

3/6/11

Think twice about going to GameStop: It's *Pokémon Sunday*, as *Black and White* hit American retail.

3/8/11

Two of the bigger games of the year debut today: *Dragon Age 2* (PS3, Xbox 360) and *Homefront* (PS3, Xbox 360, PC). *Dragon Age 2* follows Hawke, a survivor of the Blight in the first game, and *Homefront* chronicles the resistance of a North Korean occupation of the U.S. If that

isn't cool enough for you, AMC's first season of *The Walking Dead* is also out for Blu-ray.

3/10/11

PC gamers can stop crying: *Dragon Age 2* finally arrives for you.

3/15/11

*Total War* goes from West to East with *Shogun: Total War 2*. Sadly, the shogun doesn't look as imposing as Napoleon from the first game. And one of the greatest movies of 2010 is out for Blu-ray today: *Sharktopus!*

3/22/11

The Point Man tries to stop the creepy, powerful physic Alma in *FEAR 3* (PS3, Xbox 360, PC).

3/25/11

Tecmo Koei has a pair of games out today: the RPG *Ar Tonelico Qoga* (PS3), which steps away from its 2D origins and appears in 3D, and *Dynasty Warriors 7* (PS3, Xbox 360, PC). We guess

gamers can't get enough of slaughtering legions of brain-dead troops. They're joined by *Tomb Raider Trilogy* (PS3), which bundles HD remastered versions of *Legend* and *Anniversary* (along with *Underworld*); PC release *Men of War: Assault Squad*; and *Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive* (PSP).

3/29/11

Golf fans, rejoice: You finally get to (virtually) stroll the hallowed grounds of Augusta National in *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters* (PS3, Xbox 360, Wii). No word yet if the new additions to the game include a career mode where you lose endorsements after cheating on your wife. Or you can work on your William Shattner "KHAN!" impersonation with the *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* Blu-ray release.

3/31/11

End the month with *Crysis 2* (PS3, Xbox 360, PC), which takes place three years after the events of the first game and is now set in an alien-infested New York. Good times!



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### April Reply of the Month



## The Effect of DLC on Retail

**WE SAID:** "The proposed business model for *MX vs. ATV Alive* [a \$40 game that's slated for more premium DLC than most games] will be an interesting experiment. Whether or not it succeeds will inform THQ's future decisions on how to market and distribute content in the future—particularly in genres such as sports or driving games, which are easily extended through DLC."

—Pete Davison in "Analysis: DLC and the Future of Boxed Games"

» **YOU SAID:** When I first picked up an Xbox 360, I was one of those people who downloaded all of the content for a game I had regardless of whether I'd actually use it or not. The à la carte idea that THQ is dabbling with isn't a bad concept, so long as it isn't a matter of them holding stuff back for the sake of making a buck. But this profit motive is often the gamer's mindset, as publishers usually push DLC a month after a game has been released, which we all know isn't enough time for developers to actually make something. More often than not, you're paying for a key to unlock content hiding on your disc.

**T**his is why I now wait for those "ultimate" editions of games. I recently picked up the Platinum Hits version of *Mass Effect*, which was \$20 and included the DLC as well as the collector's edition bonus disc. But I'm also not one of those players who must be on the cusp of the cutting-edge; I'm one who now firmly believes in "good things come to those who wait."

—MHMason via [GamePro.com](http://GamePro.com)

### Game Manufacturing and World Conflict

**WE SAID:** "I am a staunch advocate of the phrase 'Every dollar you spend is a vote for how you'd like the world to be.' What we choose to buy and consume radiates throughout the world. This has become a problem for me recently, as I've found myself having difficulty reconciling my love of video games with the impact that they can have on the world. In short, I'm no longer convinced that the dollars I spend on video gaming are voting for a world I want to live in."

—Andrew Groen in "Editorial: The True Cost of Gaming"

**YOU SAID:** As people who work in the industry, or at least have some sort of influence on it, I believe it is our job to inform others of what is happening around the world, which you just exemplified. Knowledge is power, and sometimes the reality of the situation isn't always pleasant.

That said, war will always be around. People will always be greedy, thinking only of money. Yes, we do buy these products. But in essence that is like saying because you buy a gun, you support violence or back the gun industry, which supports armies of the world, which fight wars.

You can't hold the hunter accountable for those actions. Again, though, great article.

—Vicous\_Vertigo via [GamePro.com](http://GamePro.com)

### The App Store = Mac Gaming Dominance?

**WE SAID:** "So far the App Store has gone 2-for-2, as it's been attached to two runaway platform successes in the form





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## User Reviews:

**Call of Duty: Black Ops***By zeplinater*

It is a disservice to suggest *Call of Duty: Black Ops* is simply a new chapter in a popular franchise—it's quite the opposite, in fact. Having played through this game back to front, inside and out, and from just about every other conceivable angle, I can assure both hardcore fans of the game and those who are new to the *Call of Duty* series: This is a game you shouldn't miss.

The campaign mode is really well done—from the huge, Hollywood-style explosions to the high-speed thrill of a desperate escape attempt, you'll quickly feel that you are on the front lines. The enemy A.I. seems to work fairly intelligently, and this certainly racks up the exertion level if you are willing to try a higher level of difficulty. The main problem is that there are too many long, drawn-out cut-scenes—at times I found my mind wandering, wishing that the next mission would start.

The multiplayer mode is where I feel *Black Ops* most impresses and Treyarch displays its talent for quality gaming. The matchmaking system is quick and generally balanced, and rarely did I find myself on grossly unbalanced teams. There's also a huge choice of different game modes to satisfy the modern gamer, from the stalwarts of team deathmatch and capture the flag to newer game types for the more adventurous among you. There are still a few problems with modders, cheats, and boosters (who break the rules of the game in order to rank up quickly), but when I played, these incidents were extremely rare and in no way detracted from what is an excellently balanced gaming experience. While the multiplayer Zombie mode is fairly good fun, it felt a little underdeveloped—for lovers of the zombie-survival genre, it's definitely no *Left 4 Dead*. In essence it served as an enjoyable little side game when I grew tired of owning my friends in multiplayer and had completed the campaign. At least you can play it through co-op with a friend or join a matchmaking lobby with three other gamers.

With a campaign that's well written, extremely engrossing, and keeps up the action-packed story from start to finish, and a multiplayer mode that's learned from the previous *Call of Duty* games, *Black Ops* really warrants its record as the highest-earning entertainment launch.

★★★★

**Super Mario Galaxy 2***By DoubleUp*

Besides the lacking story, *Super Mario Galaxy 2* gets everything right—creative, fun worlds; spot-on gravity mechanics; and new elements such as the use of Yoshi. It's hard to deny that the game is fun as hell, and the difficulty is increased (somewhat) since the first *Galaxy*. The new Mario forms fit well with the other powerups, but Cloud Mario is particularly genius. Yoshi is used well throughout the game, and he even has

powerups of his own that add an interesting twist. The swimming mechanics are still a bit wonky, but thankfully, there are far less underwater levels than in the first *Galaxy*. The co-op is also improved, so that the second player can help you take out enemies and pick up items.

As always, the music is superb, the graphics are some of the best on the Wii, and getting to 100 percent will keep you playing for a while. Despite some minor complaints, it seems that Shigeru Miyamoto has once again produced a wonderful gaming experience that is a hell of a lot of fun. Now, it's time for me to get back to some more *Galaxy 2*. ★★★★★

of the iPhone and iPad. While the App Store for Mac computers is the first time the store has "competition," Apple's promotional powerhouse—and the breadth of software that can be ported over into even higher-definition—bodes well for a threepeat of video-game dominance. It may not be a hit among the hardcore gaming community, but this may be the key to getting the massive casual crowd to migrate from Apple's portable devices to a new gaming frontier."—**Dave Rudden in "The Mac App Store and Gaming"**

**YOU SAID:** I don't own a Mac, but I wouldn't pay \$10 for *Angry Birds* when I paid \$1 to have it with me at all times.

I think one of the reasons the App Store has done so well is that most of the apps are cheap. Prices from \$1 to \$5 are everywhere. I have yet to pay more than \$9.99 for a game.

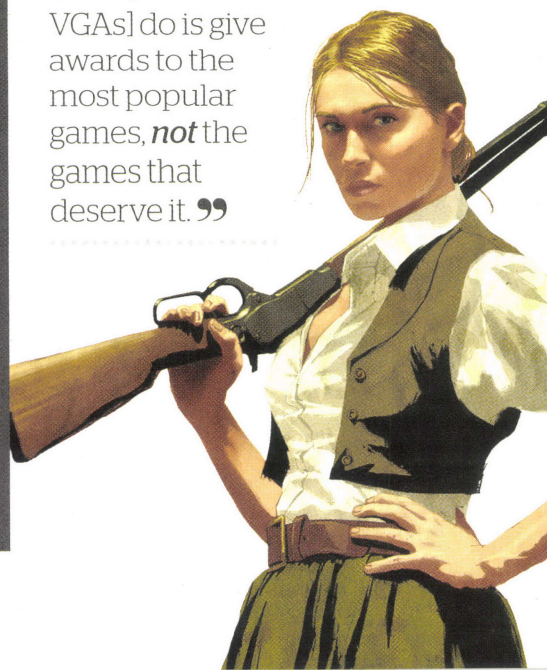
But \$19.99 for *Bejeweled 3*? No thanks. I don't understand why the Mac App Store has to be four times more expensive. I know the games are upscaled and all, but it's really off-putting to see a game I paid \$.99 for available for double or triple that on a similar service.

—**donkeykong57 via GamePro.com**

**The Misguided Gaming Focus of the VGAs and Spike TV**

**WE SAID:** "What we want is to see the VGAs land on another network. It's not that Spike TV sucks; it's just that it's a limited audience, and by now most of the world knows the average gamer isn't a socially inept 19-year-old male. We owe it to games—and we owe it to ourselves—to see the VGAs on MTV or VH1, where more people can enjoy them and where

“All [the VGAs] do is give awards to the most popular games, *not* the games that deserve it.”





a bigger budget might pay for better writers." —AJ Glasser in "Why We Hate the VGAs"

**YOU SAID:** I could not agree with you guys more. The whole show is just condescending to gamers everywhere. Just when the rest of the world is beginning to look at games as more than a 12-year-old's hobby, the VGAs represent us as juvenile, ADD-riddled, fart joke-loving morons.

Not only that, but as soon as I saw who they gave best character to, I shut my TV off and promised to never watch the show ever again. Something is just fishy there. There is no way some second-rate character from *Call of Duty* beat out John [Marston] from *Red Dead Redemption*. There's just no way. All they do is give awards to the most popular games, not the games that deserve it.

The VGAs are a joke. —EKGPROD via GamePro.com

## Art Attack

Congratulations to Charles Atkins, this month's Art Attack Winner! For this artful interpretation of *Prince of Persia*, Charles gets a new copy of *Kingdom Hearts Re:coded* for the Nintendo DS.

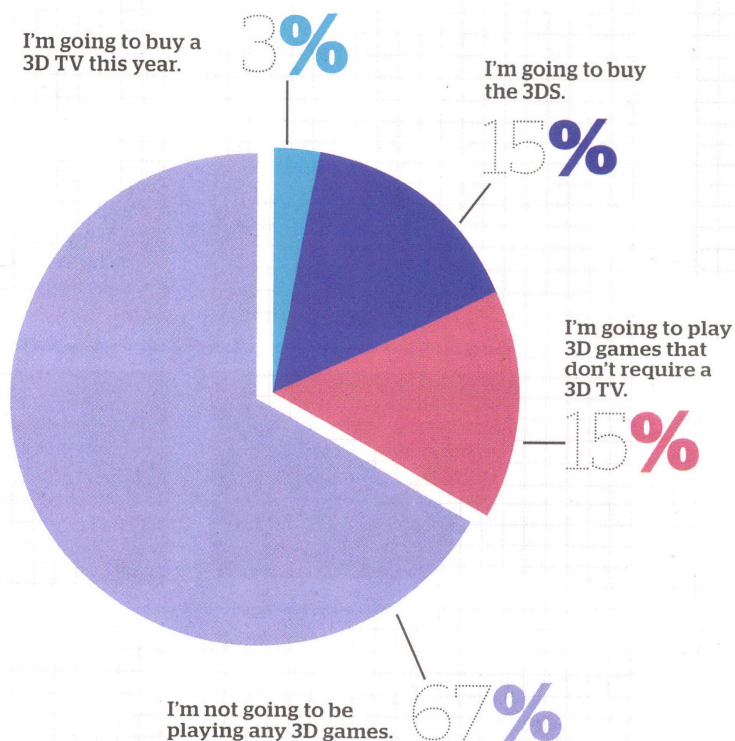


Have a gaming-related sketch, painting, model, toy, costume, photo, or otherwise uncategorizable piece of art you'd like to see featured in GamePro magazine? Send it to [feedback@gamepro.com](mailto:feedback@gamepro.com) or mail it to GamePro Art Attack at 501 Second Street, Suite 500, San Francisco, CA, 94117 for your chance to win!

## GamePro.com Poll

### Question:

What kind of 3D gaming do you think you'll be doing this year?



## GamePro on Twitter

### @GamePro

Back to the Future from @TelltaleGames might be the series' first good game. What other films have had similar failure?

**Camosid:** *Evil Dead* keeps getting closer every time, but the closest they got is mediocre.

**Awawro:** The Man of Steel. How hard could it be to make a great Superman game? Apparently, really @#\$%! hard.

**The\_Katbot:** The Matrix games have all been pretty wretched (*Path of Neo*? Enter the Matrix? The MMO?).

**Natlinxz:** Without a doubt, *E.T.* Not only was it bad enough to ruin Atari's reputation, but it almost single-handedly destroyed gaming in NA.



THE

# DEBATE CLUB

TWO GAMEPRO STAFFERS FACE OFF  
ON THE HOTTEST TOPIC IN GAMING.



**JASON  
WILSON**

## IN THIS CORNER:

Jason Wilson,  
Group Managing Editor  
Hates that he  
has to play  
BioWare's  
Hawke and  
not his own  
character.



**ANDY  
BURT**

## IN THIS CORNER:

Andy Burt,  
Assistant Editor  
Trusts BioWare  
to deliver a  
strong character-focused  
narrative.

VS.

**THE QUESTION:** Will *Dragon Age II*'s predefined storytelling and hero hurt its role-playing value?

**My favorite aspect** of *Dragon Age* is rolling up a character that I can truly put my own stamp on. While players will be able to customize Hawke, you're still playing Hawke, not your Elven mage, your Dwarf fighter, or even your Human templar. I want to play my character, not BioWare's.

**As a huge fan** of the *Mass Effect* series, I think that we have to give BioWare the benefit of the doubt. Their focus since starting *Dragon Age II*'s development has been to deliver a story that spans a much greater length of time than *Origins* did, and their new framed narrative structure essentially makes the traditional RPG customization system you mentioned impossible to implement; the amount of specific dialogue trees needed would be insane.

**Would it? I could see it working** without a predetermined character. Just don't use the hero's name. Don't refer to what race the hero is. Let us determine that for ourselves.

**If the developers** did allow you to choose your own race and backstory, don't you think that they'd have to water down what the game's narrators are able to talk about? I feel like it would come off sounding too vague.

**No. I'm an old-school RPG player**—my first was *Ultima II*. I want the tale to be my story as well. And if I can't tailor the main character more to my liking, it's hard for me to make it my story. That's how I feel about *Mass Effect*—by making every character a Shepard clone, I'm playing BioWare's story more than my story. In *Dragon Age: Origins*, I'm playing my story as much as theirs.

**I can definitely understand** why a lot of *Origins* fans are a bit put off by the idea of playing as Hawke and not having as much of a say in who their character is, compared to the freedom *Origins* offers. I suppose as a relatively "new-school" RPG fan—my bread-and-butter was the 8- and 16-bit generation of console RPGs—I'm not put off by the idea of "going along for the ride."

**THE LOSER:** Jason's closed, old-fart mind lands him handcuffed to a chair, where he must play *Mass Effect* and *Mass Effect 2* back-to-back.



DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT LINES OF GAMING

# Spawn

pt. PREVIEWS // CULTURE // STUFF



**I**n this month's Spawn Point, we voyage to Middle-earth for **The Lord of the Rings: War in the North**, explore **Uncharted 3's** perilous sand dunes, and trip out with **Child of Eden**. We also confront The Beast in **Infamous 2**, dig into the art of the **Assassin's Creed** graphic novel, and speculate on what to expect from Guillermo del Toro's terror title, **Insane**.

➤ **Above:** Nathan Drake's adventures hit the desert in *Uncharted 3*. Full story on page 20.



# THE LORD *of* THE RINGS: *War in the North*

We brave the undead, trolls, and haunted graves to bring you details on Snowblind's first "couch co-op" RPG of the HD generation. **WORDS BY JASON WILSON**



XBOX/PC

It's been a rough generation for the role-playing game. While series such as *Mass Effect*, *Dragon Age*, and *Fallout* have carved out significant followings, the multitudes of role-playing games of previous years just aren't available. This is especially true of co-op action-RPGs, such as the "couch co-op" games *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* or *X-Men: Legends*.

Snowblind Studios is ready to jump into the HD generation with *The Lord of the Rings: War in the North*. It's the developer's first action-RPG of this generation, and it's a darker take on J.R.R. Tolkien's work than what we've seen in previous games.

## Bloody Work

As the books and films show, Middle-earth can be a brutal place. Orcs and Wargs tear into its people. Noble warriors cut through swathes of Mordor's scum. And great beasts such as the Mûmakil can rule the battlefield. "We're exploring the dark side of the *The Lord of the Rings* universe," says Snowblind Art Director Phil Straub.

*War in the North* is the first video game based on Tolkien's work to carry a "M" rating. Snowblind's trying to capture the brutality that Tolkien depicted in his books, which is influenced by his experiences on World War I battlefields, in their game.

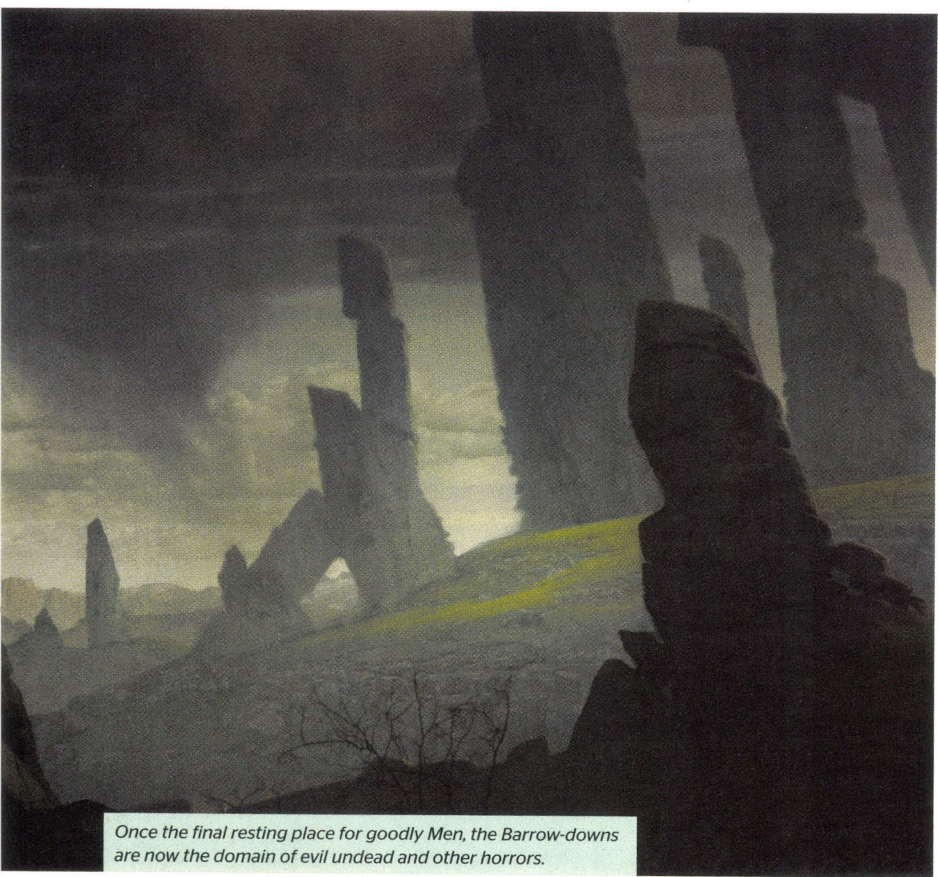
*War in the North's* "brutal combat" focuses on combos that allow characters to rip apart and smash their foes. These "brutal finishes" sever limbs and spew blood from foes through critical strikes. Build your chain big enough and you go into "heroic mode," which brings, as Engineer Zach Peterson terms it, "bigger effects, bigger finishing moves." It also grants more XP, rewarding the player for mastering the combat. These may also be co-op maneuvers.

During their demo, the designers showed a Ranger taking on a gaggle of Orcs. As he tore into the rabble, an icon appeared above his head, denoting that he was ready to go into





The undead of the Barrow-downs are the first obstacle you face in War in the North.



Once the final resting place for goodly Men, the Barrow-downs are now the domain of evil undead and other horrors.

heroic mode. Limbs went flying with sprays of acrid, black Orc blood.

### Total War

Tolkien's works allude that the war between the good people of Middle-earth and Sauron took place in more places than Gondor and Rohan. The Dwarves of The Lonely Mountain in Erebor and the Men of Dale fought off attacks, as did the Elves of Mirkwood and Lothlórien. War in the North tells an original story, one that intersects with *The Lord of the Rings* throughout the game.

Your three-person Fellowship starts its journey after a force holding Sarn Ford and

protecting the Shire falls to the Nazgûl. Your captain sends this ad-hoc Fellowship—Eradan the Ranger, Andriel the Elf, and Farin the Dwarf—to Bree to warn Aragorn that the Nazgûl are now in the Shire. But the Greenway, the great highway, may be watched by Sauron's forces, so your captain sends this Fellowship through the Barrow-downs, once the resting place of the great heroes of Arnor and now the realm of the Barrow-wights.

### Bring Out Your (Un)Dead

The Barrow-downs are a fell place. As the party crosses into this unholy ground, enshrouded by a green mist similar to what's

## THE FELLOWSHIP



### Eradan the Ranger

This Dúnedain is among the forces attempting to hold Sarn Ford and protect the Shire from the Black Riders, but the Nazgûl overwhelm them. He fights with a sword and a bow, and his special abilities help him hide from foes and track enemies.

### Andriel the Elf

Sent by Elrond from Rivendell to gather information on Sauron's forces, this loremaster joins the defenders of Sarn Ford. This High Elf fights with a staff and uses the power of her Elven heritage to protect and heal her fellows. She can erect a magic globe that can offer protection to the party—or destruction to her foes. She also uses herbs and other materials to create helpful items such as elixirs.

### Farin the Dwarf

One of Dain's people from The Lonely Mountain in Erebor, Farin defends the Hobbits' homeland to repay the debt his people owe to Bilbo Baggins. Farin fights with ax and crossbow and uses his abilities to either soak up damage or dish it out, along with spotting weaknesses in stone walls.

### The Nemesis

**Agandâur:** This lieutenant of Sauron is a Black Númenorean, Dúnedain seduced by the dark lord centuries ago (the Nazgûl were once kings and princes among the Black Númenoreans). Agandâur is in the North to establish a second front in Sauron's war—and help him find The One Ring.





## HISTORY OF THE NORTH

The North hasn't always been a bucolic, peaceful land, as the Barrow-downs and the ruins of Weather-top attest. When the faithful survivors of Númenor settled in Middle-earth following the destruction of their island home, the goodly Men formed two realms: Gondor in the south, and Arnor, the northern realm that was the seat of Elendil and his heirs. After defeating Sauron in the Last Alliance of Elves and Men, Arnor prospered for centuries.

Because the One Ring wasn't destroyed, Sauron's evil works remained in Middle-earth. Arnor eventually split into three realms. But the fatal blow would come from the chief of Sauron's most lethal agents, the Nazgûl, who rose from Angmar, a realm meant to establish a second front in Sauron's quest to rule Middle-earth (and also find The One Ring). Here the Witch King and his forces whittled down the good kingdoms, eventually destroying Arthedain, the final remnant

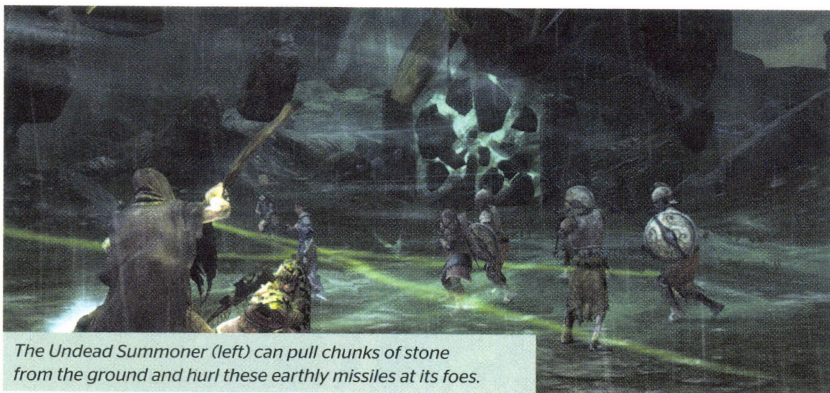
of Arnor. It's the Witch-king's forces that inhabit the Barrow-downs, turning the corpses of good men into the Barrow-wights. Gondor's forces arrived a year later, and with the Elves, they smashed Angmar. The Witch-king returned to Mordor.

But the evil of Angmar remains in the North, and the Dúnedain continued their watch long after Angmar's fall. This is where the *War in the North* begins....





The Emaciated Troll somehow decides that the Fellowship would make a nice snack.



The Undead Summoner (left) can pull chunks of stone from the ground and hurl these earthly missiles at its foes.

seen in the The Paths of the Dead scene from *The Return of the King*, the undead erupt from the soil and attack.

Playing with Producer Ruth Tomandi and Lead Designer Andrew Maguire (the game allows for three-player co-op online or two-player splitscreen locally), we take on the undead. Playing Andriel, Tomandi casts a globe of protection over us as Maguire, playing Farin, and I first attack with range weapons before pulling out our ax and sword for some up-close work. Limbs are flying, and I spy what appears to be blood coming from the undead corpses. As I get a better feel for the controls, we make our way down the Downs, destroying more undead until we come to an impassable gate near one of the infamous barrows.

Then the troll shows up.

### Trolling for a Beatdown

Brutish, strong, and as ugly as any other of its ilk, the Emaciated Troll of the Barrow-downs subsists mostly on the carrion it can scrounge. It certainly won't bypass a chance to chow down on some fresh meat.

As it bellows and swings at us, we dart in and out of the range of the troll's club as Tomandi fires magic bolts from her staff. I used Eradan's stealth ability to "disappear" and sneak in for strikes at the troll's back, evading the beast's massive damage-dealing club. We finally cast down the evil, stinking beast, and proceed inside a barrow....

### Dark Magic

A sickly green fog covers the ground inside the barrow, where we fight more undead. The barrow also lets the characters show off some of their other abilities: Farin can find weaknesses in stone, unveiling other paths; Eradan's tracking ability can reveal new paths; and Andriel turns herbs into healing elixirs.

We find some loot caches and more walking rotting corpses in the barrow, and we then exit out on the other side of the impassable gate. Once there, we now have enough experience to level up. *War in the North* offers a standard skill tree, but the paths allow you to better tailor your character to your playstyle. After smashing some more foes, the demo transitions to its conclusion: a boss fight against the Undead Summoner.

The Undead Summoner is a sight to behold; its dark magic rips up chunks of the ground, and these lumps of earth swirl up in a spiral 30 feet tall. It can summon undead. The Fellowship uses their abilities together to whittle down its undead coterie before taking him out.

Snowblind has developed "couch co-op" games in a variety of worlds: *Dungeons & Dragons' Forgotten Realms*, *EverQuest's Norrath*, and the *DC universe*. *War in the North* brings all of the components of the Snowblind formula to Tolkien's world. But they have another reason why they're so excited about *War in the North*.

"Because [*The Lord of the Rings*] is awesome," Maguire says.

“The Undead Summoner is a sight to behold; its dark magic rips up chunks of the ground, and these lumps of earth swirl up in a spiral 30 feet tall.”





# UNCHARTED 3: DRAKE'S DECEPTION

We talk to Naughty Dog to learn what's in store for Nathan Drake's deceptive new adventure.

**WORDS BY ERIC NEIGHER**



PLAYSTATION 3

**“W**e spent an entire day studying sand,” *Uncharted 3* Art Director Robb Ruppel proclaims. He and the team at Naughty Dog want to be very sure about how sand works. “We went out to the Imperial Dunes on the border of California and Mexico, and we spent a day out there just seeing what it was like to walk, to run, to roll—we really wanted to see how thick the crust was, how much did it give when you walked on it. And we came back and told our programmers, ‘Hey, we need the sand to do this now.’” All this effort, Ruppel explains, is to ensure the level of art and physics detail in *Uncharted 3*’s desert environments matches

reality. And if they’re willing to go that far just to get sand right, imagine what they’ve done to improve the fighting mechanics, the cinematic experience, and most importantly, the multiplayer.

That’s right. According to just about everybody on *Uncharted 3*’s development team, the latest and greatest Naughty Dog innovation focuses much more on multiplayer than past games have. While they’re pretty close-mouthed about what the multiplayer actually contains, Game Director Justin Richmond insists that their goal is to make *Uncharted 3* the go-to game for PlayStation 3 players when they want to go at it against other humans.

## Familiar Faces

Multiplayer isn’t the only thing Naughty Dog’s tackling in *Uncharted 3*. While many elements make the series one of the best-rated franchises for the PS3 (or any other system), the developers believe they can make Drake’s next outing even more memorable.

Foremost among these elements is the game’s story and characterization. Nathan Drake is back as the series’ main character, but according to *Uncharted 3* Creative Director Amy Hennig, the tone of both the overarching story and of the main antagonist is darker and more serious than what players are accustomed to from the franchise. *Uncharted 3*’s





villain is “far more threatening than [Drake] expects.”

When it comes to the good guys, Naughty Dog promises more of fan-favorite Victor “Sully” Sullivan. He’s much more than just the guy who offers you your missions; Sully actively participates in the action this time, at least as an A.I.-controlled character (co-op plans, if any, are still very hush-hush). In a recent demo we saw, Sully picked up a gun and covered Drake on more than one occasion, and vice versa, as well as advising the player on where to move and the general state of affairs. Sully’s always been a good foil for Drake—he’s only slightly less reckless, but he’s also a kind of father figure/buddy-movie partner. Seeing him more taking an active role in the gameplay, rather than just as an interstitial device, should help make *Uncharted 3*’s story even more compelling.

### The Third Story

And compelling it promises to be. As usual, the plot starts off small and local, and it ends up taking Drake all over the damn world as he struggles to uncover a mystery involving his putative ancestor, Sir Francis Drake; Francis’s ship, *The Golden Hind*; T.E. Lawrence (aka Lawrence of Arabia); and the mythical lost city Iram of the Pillars. The demo level we

saw features Drake and Sully trying to escape from a crumbling chateau somewhere in the French countryside, but other locales include North America and the Rub’ al-Khali desert in Saudi Arabia. Hennig stresses *Uncharted 3*’s subtitle, *Drake’s Deception*, is particularly significant, as deception plays a key role in the plot. She also hints that it may not be clear which Drake is wrapped up in the deception (Francis or Nathan) or whether they’re on the giving or receiving end of that deception. Whatever the case, knowing Hennig’s writing, the script is sure to have many a clever twist.

The gameplay is, according to Richmond, the same—but better. Nate has a few new moves for getting around levels, but these levels still consist primarily of two things: traversing and puzzles—with a healthy dose of gunplay and fisticuffs thrown in. Indeed, Naughty Dog promises that A.I. baddies now fight better, forming up into squads to take you on, with some pinning you while others flank you or hold you while another whales away on your ribcage. Of course, between fights you’ll need to get around a variety of treacherous environments, clambering over this obstacle, sidling along that ledge, sometimes as the environment is changing around you. Remember that chateau we mentioned? It was on fire and collapsing through most of the

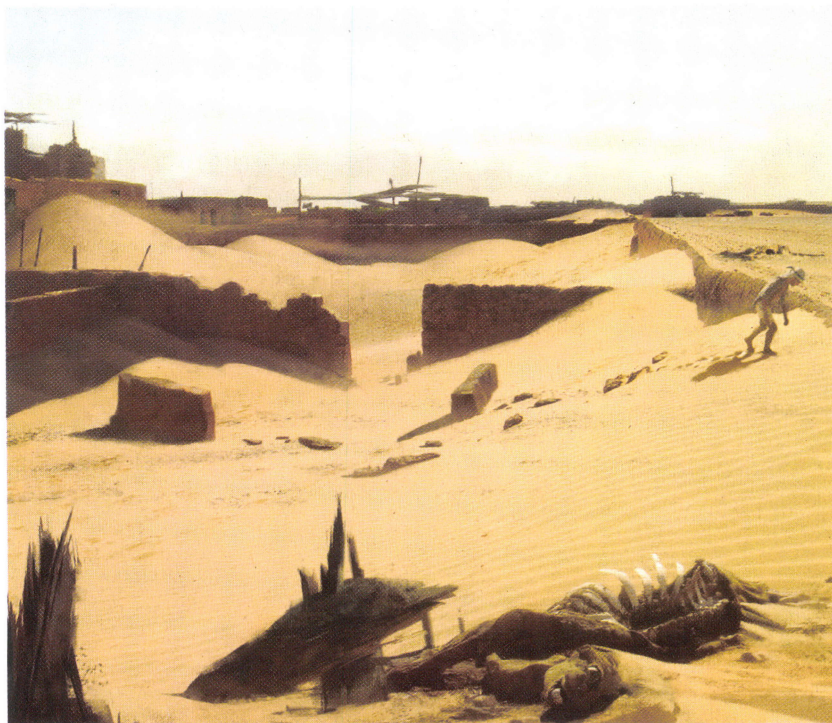
### WHERE IN THE WORLD

#### is Nathan Drake?

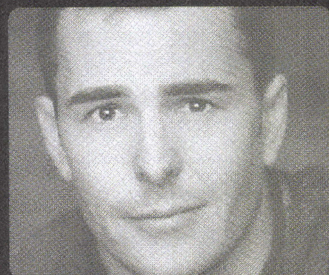
The Rub’ al-Khali desert (one of the largest in the world), plays a big part in *Drake’s Deception* for one reason: It’s been rumored to be the home of Iram of the Pillars, an ancient, forgotten city supposedly buried deep beneath the Saudi Arabian desert. One of the earliest mentions of the city is in the Quran, the Islamic holy book, which tells of a city of “lofty pillars.” According to legend, it was destroyed by God (à la Sodom and Gomorrah) because its people defied him.







NICE TO MEET YOU,



Mr. North:

Nolan North, the voice of *Uncharted* hero Nathan Drake, is a busy voice actor—he has appeared in more than 100 games over the past 10-plus years, such as *Mad World* and *Saints Row*. But what few gamers realize is that North actually got his start on television, starring on *General Hospital*, one of soap opera's longest-running series.



gameplay sequences we witnessed, providing the player with a very hostile environment. Thankfully, Nate can now thrust himself out and around overhangs, à la *Assassin's Creed*, as well as wield firearms while climbing and sidling, making him much more versatile at getting around levels—and staying alive while he does it.

### Rollin' With Your Homies

Naughty Dog remains closed-mouthed on multiplayer. But we did ask Richmond what games he's been playing. "I played *Red Dead*

[*Redemption*] and loved it. *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* was awesome. Even simple games like *Limbo* or *Super Meat Boy* can creep into your work." So will those titles have had some influence on the multiplayer design here? Richmond remains mute on that issue, but he did say: "We felt we really made a lot of headway learning how to do multiplayer with *Uncharted 2*, and we felt we could've done a lot more if we'd had more time. We learned a lot of important lessons, like: 'Don't significantly change the way the health system or damage systems work from the single-player

to the multiplayer,' for example. And we've applied that experience to the multiplayer in *Uncharted 3*."

Multi- or single-player, though, the game definitely isn't using PlayStation 3's Move motion controllers. But it's going to be in 3D—so if you have a 3D TV and some funky glasses, get ready to experience the Saudi desert like it was meant to be experienced—in the comfy confines of your living room. Hey, if we actually wanted to experience the desert for real, we wouldn't be gamers, would we?

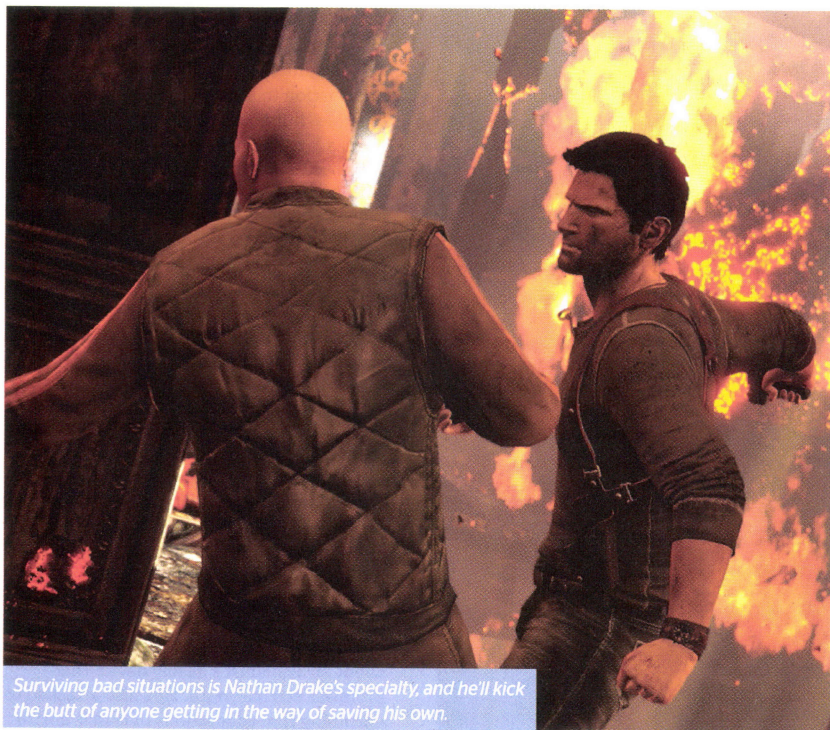


## GETTING THE

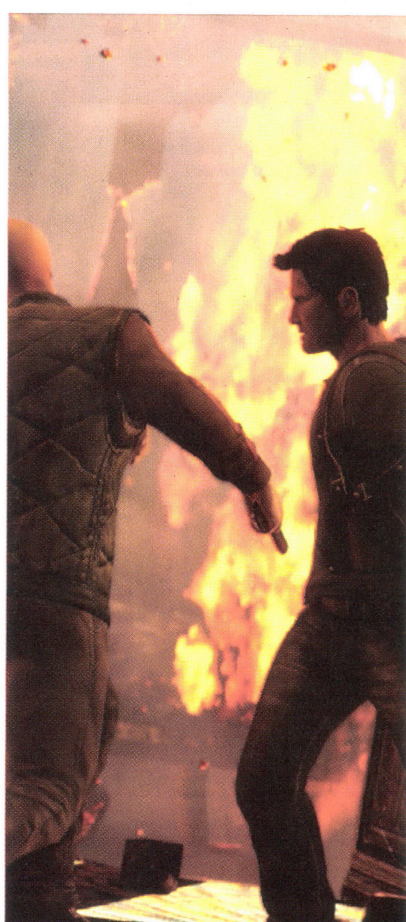


### Full Story:

Sure, most people are aware that *Drake's Deception* marks the third game in the *Uncharted* series, but hardcore fans will know that the story really begins with *Eye of Indra*, an episodic motion comic released on the PlayStation Network (and later on the *Uncharted 2* Game of the Year edition). The episodes take place a short time before the events of *Drake's Fortune* and find Nathan Drake searching for an amulet known as the Eye of Indra, which he plans to use to fund the expedition for his ancestor's coffin. As you might guess, things don't go according to plan.



Surviving bad situations is Nathan Drake's specialty, and he'll kick the butt of anyone getting in the way of saving his own.







Guillermo del Toro and an undead bloodsucker from his 2002 action-horror movie *Blade II* smile for the camera.

LOOKING FOWARD

# Guillermo del Toro's INSANE

We examine the acclaimed filmmaker's body of work to determine what to expect from his horror-game trilogy.

**WORDS BY PATRICK SHAW**

As game journalists, we often hold off on writing stories about new games until we have enough concrete information to put something substantial together. But talking about games we *don't* know a lot about can make for some of the best discussions, because their potential is limitless. These amorphous games could influence the design of video games; they could also turn out to be absolute trainwrecks.

## A Filmmaker's Approach to Game Design

Unveiled at the 2010 Spike Video Game Awards, *Insane* is a survival-horror game from the mind of influential filmmaker, producer, and author Guillermo del Toro. His most notable movies include *Pan's Labyrinth* and the *Hellboy* series, which he directed and feature original creature designs that del Toro's powerful imagination helped shape. While both of these movies blend visual elements of fantasy and horror, del Toro has also created movies that classify as pure horror: 2001's chilling Spanish-language ghost story *The Devil's Backbone*, and his directorial debut, 1993's *Cronos*, which is about an alchemist's deadly device that promises eternal youth. He's also attached to upcoming film adaptations of classic horror literature: H.P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The kind of stories del Toro gravitates to—he often infuses nightmarish visuals into the fantasy world he creates—are important in determining what kind of video game we can expect from him.

## Love for Lovecraft

“I'm excited. Very few games channel that Lovecraft-esque vibe that actually makes horror games scary. *Amnesia: The Dark Descent*, the *Penumbra* series, and *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* are all pretty goddamn scary due to the Lovecraftian elements. With del Toro being a huge fan of his work, hopefully he'll nail it.”

—GetsugaSSJ via GamePro.com

The *Hellboy* franchise, for instance, presents a vision of life on Earth where the paranormal—like the series' benevolent demon hero, occultists, and an immortal killer Nazi—and the everyday coexist. Del Toro has repeatedly exhibited his ability to populate worlds with vibrant, immensely interesting characters, which will likely lend itself to making his *Insane* trilogy resonate with gamers.

Games dreamed up by moviemakers, however, are a mixed bag. They can turn out great, like Steven Spielberg's collaboration on 2008's *Boom Blox*, or abysmal, like Clive Barker's *Jericho* in 2007.



## A Trilogy of Terror

The premise of del Toro's *Insane* is largely unknown—though its name suggests the plot involves the loss of sanity (but we don't know who or what is insane; it could very well be the player themselves). *Insane*'s cryptic teaser trailer reveals little, but it does hint at the morbid tone of the new game as agonized cries and eerie whispers echo throughout. There's also a glimpse of a sharp instrument moments from puncturing a human eye. Del Toro states that he's creating *Insane* as a video-game trilogy, with the intention of taking players to "a place they have never seen before," suggesting that like *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*, the director is likely building a fictional realm that's unlike anything we know of on this planet. He also adds that "every single action [in *Insane*] makes [players] question their own senses of morality and reality." The "reality" del Toro mentions is particularly interesting, as it seems to suggest that the twisted world of *Insane* could be the object of the protagonist's warped mental state.

## Volition's Stab at Horror

While del Toro maintains creative control of the project, *Insane* is developed by Volition, Inc. The studio is new to the horror genre, but they've proven their proficiency in crafting riveting action experiences with both their sci-fi action franchise *Red Faction* and the irreverent open-world *Saints Row* series.

## Insanity's Arrival

The first chapter of del Toro's *Insane* trilogy is currently slated for a 2013 release for the PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, and PC.



*Hellboy's* title character is proof that superheroes don't always have to look like Clark Kent.

## Game Design Isn't Filmmaking

“I just hope Guillermo del Toro realizes that making a game is very different from making a movie and approaches it with the right mindset. That said, I'm pretty excited by the storytelling chops he's bringing to the table. He's shown that he can create memorable setpieces and fantastical characters, so I'm fairly optimistic that the game will at least look fantastic. I just hope it's actually fun to play.”

—Tae Kim, Senior Editor

## SELECTED WORK



by Guillermo del Toro

**2013:**  
*At the Mountains of Madness*  
Director

**2013:**  
*Insane* (video game)  
Creative Director

**2012:**  
*Frankenstein*  
Director

**2009:**  
*Splice*  
Executive Producer

**2008:**  
*Hellboy II: The Golden Army*  
Writer and Director

**2007:**  
*The Orphanage*  
Producer

**2006:**  
*Pan's Labyrinth*  
Writer, Producer, and Director

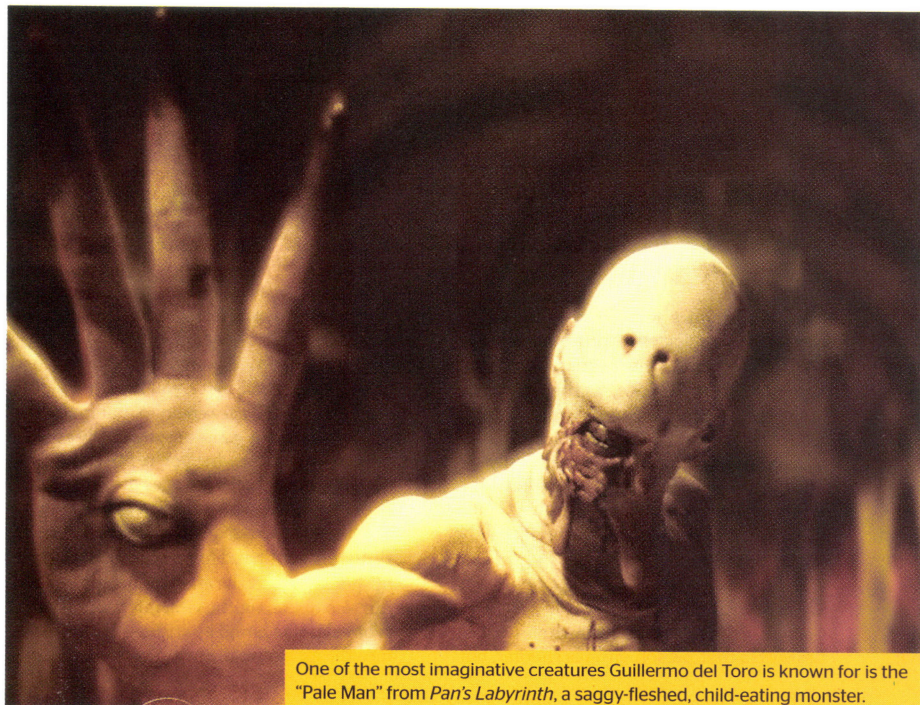
**2004:**  
*Hellboy*  
Writer and Director

**2002:**  
*Blade II*  
Director

**2001:**  
*The Devil's Backbone*  
Writer, Producer, and Director

**1997:**  
*Mimic*  
Writer and Director

**1993:**  
*Cronos*  
Writer and Director



One of the most imaginative creatures Guillermo del Toro is known for is the "Pale Man" from *Pan's Labyrinth*, a saggy-fleshed, child-eating monster.



# CHILD of EDEN

From the makers of *Rez* and *Lumines* comes a true mind-bender that works out your body *and* your senses in a gorgeous dreamworld.

**WORDS BY ANDY BURT**



PLAYSTATION 3 / XBOX 360

**N**ot many games evoke a sense of trekking through a kaleidoscopic hallucination, but a few minutes of *Child of Eden* is enough to make you wish they could hop in a time machine and head back to the 1960s. Q Entertainment prides themselves on their ability to meld music and rhythm-based gameplay with visuals bent on causing sensory overload, and *Child of Eden* is the best representation thus far of the studio's unique game design focus.

The premise of *Child of Eden* is as quirky as its rhythm/shooter gameplay. Players must purify Eden, a vast dream-like virtual reality built upon an interconnected web of human

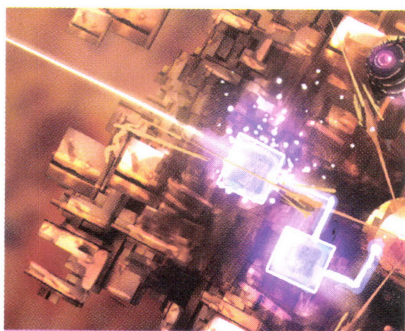
memories. Lumi, a young woman who is often heard singing over the soundtrack of *Child of Eden*, exists within Eden. Your goal in each stage (or "archive," as they're called in the game) is to purify each area in order to protect Lumi. The Lumi character has other ties to *Child of Eden* creator Tetsuya Mizuguchi—she appears as the face of his mysterious real-life electronic group, Genki Rockets. They also happen to provide all the music for the game.

## Curing the Virus

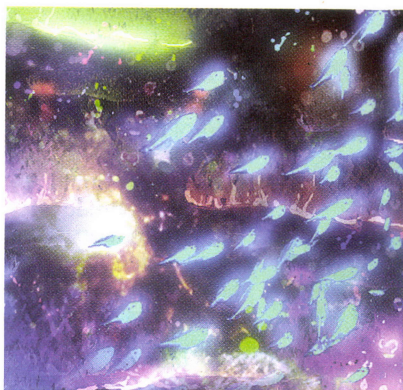
Gameplay in *Child of Eden* shares similarities with a first-person on-rails shooter, but

instead of shooting Russians or zombies, you eradicate different enemy "viruses" that appear on screen as you travel through Eden. Playing on Kinect, you hold your hand out toward the screen to manipulate a crosshair as the game automatically sends rapid-fire shots at what you're targeting. Clapping your hands changes the rapid-fire attack into a lock-on weapon, and you can highlight a number of enemies before thrusting your hand forward to send dozens of shots flying at the enemies onscreen. You can also obliterate the viral infection with a room-clearing bomb by sticking both hands into the air simultaneously.





You "shoot" abstract "viruses" in this game, meaning it should be "family friendly."



## WHAT IS?

### Synesthesia:

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* summarizes synesthesia as "a condition in which one type of sensory stimulation creates perception in another sense." Though many in the medical world categorize synesthesia as a debilitating condition, many "synesthetes" (people who regularly experience synesthesia) consider their condition a gift. Many scientific professionals have researched how to achieve synthetic, or artificial, synesthesia over the years.

### RECOMMENDED PLAYING:

Tetsuya Mizuguchi

*Space Channel 5*—Dreamcast, 2000

*Rez*—PlayStation 2, 2002

*Lumines*—PSP, 2005

*Every Extend Extra*—PSP, 2006



The variety of art styles across the different "archives" show Tetsuya Mizuguchi at his artistic nadir as a gamemaker.



Though the limited physical movements *Child of Eden* requires are fairly simplistic, playing through a few "archives" can feel a bit taxing on your arms, but it's not enough to cause any reasonable discomfort. What it might do to your mind, on the other hand....

### Sensory Overload

Like Mizuguchi's previous work on such titles like *Rez* (PlayStation 2), *Lumines* (PSP), and *Every Extend Extra* (PSP), *Child of Eden* represents the developer's continued interest in creating gaming experiences that evoke an artificial synesthesia (see sidebar, "What is Synesthesia") in the player. By creating a feedback loop where players alter both sounds

and visuals within the game, along with the physical response the game sends back to the player—Kinect players are encouraged to stick an extra 360 controller in their pocket or somewhere on their body to experience a vibration—experiencing *Child of Eden* can become neurologically intoxicating. Indeed, Mizuguchi has said that synesthesia is his "life's theme."

If Q Entertainment's goal with *Child of Eden* is to elicit a mental response from players with their game's intensely trippy gameplay, they've surely succeeded. With any luck, *Child of Eden* will further cement Q Entertainment as one of the most creative teams in video-game development.





# TOTAL WAR: SHOGUN

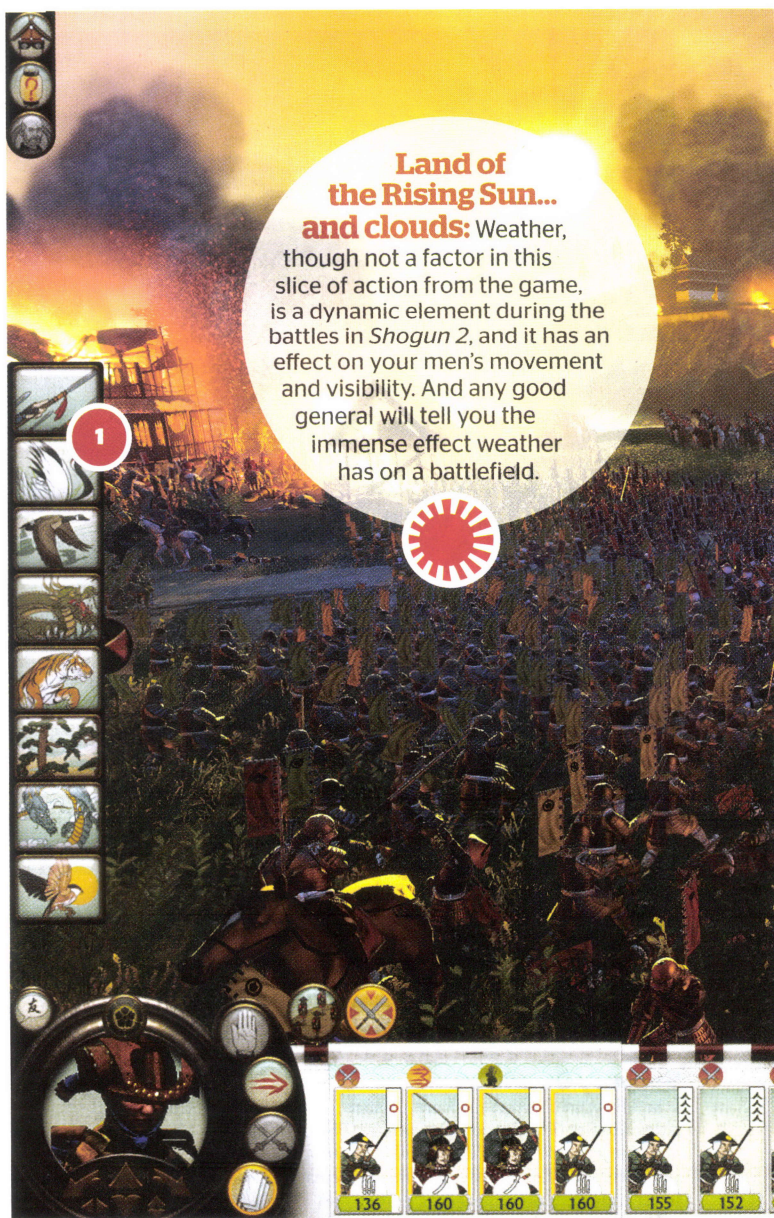


## THE TOTAL WAR SERIES

began in feudal Japan and returns there after stops in the battlefields of ancient Rome, the Middle East, and the Napoleonic wars. *Shogun 2* incorporates naval battles into the action as well as a larger campaign that plays out not unlike a classic strategy board game. But the full-scale engagements, featuring tens of thousands of historically realistic units, is where the real drama is.

## 1. Animal Style

Those tabs on the left don't represent some sort of magical animal familiars (this is a historical simulation, after all), but rather, they stand for military formations that the Japanese named after different critters. The Tiger formation is one that favors fierce, up-close melee combat, while others like the Snake and Crane represent real historical formations more attuned to speed or ranged attacks.



### Land of the Rising Sun...

**and clouds:** Weather, though not a factor in this slice of action from the game, is a dynamic element during the battles in *Shogun 2*, and it has an effect on your men's movement and visibility. And any good general will tell you the immense effect weather has on a battlefield.



## 2. Castle Crashers

The Battle of Castle Nagashino is one of the most important military engagements in the history of Japan. It's also one of the most portrayed in video games. Not only do you play the battle in *Total War: Shogun 2*, but it's also showcased in Koei's *Kessen III* and *Samurai Warriors*, both for the PlayStation 2. In addition to the fortresses found on historic battlefields, you can create your own castles in the game from three different types and improve them over five upgrade levels.

## 3. Don't bring a katana to a gunfight

The Battle of Nagashino is often called the first modern battle in Japanese history, namely because of the use of firearms by Oda Nobunaga against the *Takeda* clan. The *Takeda* clan, shown on the screen in red, unleashed a furious cavalry charge on Nobunaga's troops. But a combination of pikemen and firearm-equipped arquebusiers made short work of what was then the most powerful weapon a *Daimyo* could employ: men on horseback. The introduction of guns changed history.



### Samurai Fodder:

*Shogun 2* features a number of unit types for you to deploy in the field, from Samurai of many variations, riflemen, and horsemen, all the way down to the lowly *Ashigaru*, or peasant warriors. You can see them here wearing cone-shaped helmets and simple armor while wielding a spear called a *Yari*. One peasant in the face of a trained Samurai may seem like a mismatch, but when you get 56,000 of them on the field, they can seem much more formidable.



# Infamous 2 gets SUCKER PUNCHED

Sucker Punch Producer and Cofounder Brian Fleming discusses the birth of his studio, its influences, and the highly anticipated release of their superhero sandbox adventure, *Infamous 2*.

**WORDS BY ANDY BURT**



If you were to compare the silly N64 platformer *Rocket: Robot on Wheels* to the open-world adventures of *Infamous*, you'd find that they share little in common besides their developer: Sucker Punch. The Seattle-based studio responsible for the *Sly Cooper* series and the critically hailed *Infamous* may have started small, but they're well on their way to being recognized as a top-notch creator of epic adventures thanks to the release of *Infamous 2* later this year.

Like many game studios, Sucker Punch started as a small, creative group constantly inspired by new games and technology. Cofounder Brian Fleming remembers their early days.

"When we started the studio, we were in that very 'blissfully ignorant' stage," Fleming remembers. "We thought we'd make video games just 'cause. We'd play games all the time, and I still remember when *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* came out, it made us realize that disc-based games were going to turn into cinematic experiences.

"The reason our first game [*Rocket: Robot on Wheels*] was on the Nintendo 64 was because it was on a cartridge. The amount of data you could put on a cartridge at that time was around 10 megs, compared to the roughly 700 megs disc-based games shot for. So the cartridge was perfect for our team. We had more technical people than artistic people at the time."

## Major League Gaming

Once the team had their footing and aligned with Sony, they began to feel like they were, as Fleming puts it, "entering the big leagues." Sony is unique in having a number of studios that inspire one another, rather than compete for the top prize. Fleming admits that being close to a number of other studios in the Seattle area is equally inspiring for Sucker Punch.

"When we joined up with Sony, we felt really blessed to have the Naughty Dog and Insomniac guys as part of that group," Fleming says. "Now we feel like we belong in that

group. But at the beginning, for us, it was like stepping into the majors. Those are the teams that we're closest with.

## The Gift of a Sequel

Though it'd be easy for a studio to cash in on a strong new IP, creating sequel after sequel, Fleming believes that a studio's desire to work on a sequel isn't about making money but about creating a game that's worth turning into a series. He equates Sucker Punch's work on *Infamous 2* to a sports team having a great year.

"I think getting the opportunity to do a sequel is like having a really good season and going to the playoffs," Fleming says. "You don't set off with the mindset of 'I want to make five of these games.' Approaching it from a monetary angle, you have to think that if you *don't* get to make a sequel, you've kind of failed to create an [intellectual property] worthy of *having* a sequel. The sequel is really the reward for doing a good job."



## WHAT IS?

### A City in Shambles

*Infamous 2's* setting resembles New Orleans in a number of ways, from the Creole-esque townhouses to the French Quarter-inspired architecture; New Marais is rich with the city's southern influence. In addition to the aesthetics of the city, Sucker Punch was also drawn to the city due to the catastrophic impact the area experienced from Hurricane Katrina. Cole's powers in *Infamous 2* also reflect the disastrous weather systems the city experienced, like his new tornado-like area attack.

“You have to think that if you don't get to make a sequel, you've kind of failed to create an IP worthy of having a sequel. The sequel is really the reward for doing a good job.”

—Brian Fleming, Sucker Punch cofounder

## An Electric Mardi Gras

The Empire City of the first *Infamous* is certainly an interesting sandbox to explore, but Sucker Punch wanted to start completely fresh for the sequel. The source of their inspiration this time, New Orleans, provided them a number of creative avenues to take in crafting a new area for Cole MacGrath to explore—and destroy. The result is New Marais, a city that captures the New Orleans vibe without replicating the city.

“We had to choose a setting with more diversity. It couldn't be a bunch of new levels inside *Infamous 1*,” Fleming explains. “We designed Empire City to be cold and gray, more like a city in the northeastern United States, and there weren't big open expanses of greenery. New Marais has more of a New Orleans feel to it. A lot of our designers explored the area around New Orleans and took pictures for reference. We're not trying to re-create New Orleans, but we want to get the feel of the area into the game; you can't really experience that unless you're there. We've certainly kept in mind some current events that have occurred in the area over the past few years, and you'll see echoes of that within the game.”

Sucker Punch is putting a larger emphasis on how they're telling Cole's story in *Infamous 2*. Along with a fresh story-line, *Infamous 2* has undergone a full motion-capture treatment to ensure a higher level of believability for the characters.

“From a storytelling standpoint, clearly we're not going to be Steven Spielberg at the end of this project, but we're changing a lot of the fundamentals of storytelling in the game,” Fleming says. “All cut-scenes in the game are being performed on a motion-capture stage, and it really provides the opportunity to have an empathetic experience with the characters. We're not doing it because it's cool, but

because it has a chance to move players and involve them more in the story.”

## The Wide World of Gaming

Game developers take influences from a variety of sources, and playing a game like *Infamous*, players can glean a bit of where the team was coming from. Closing out our conversation, Fleming brings up a few games that really impressed Sucker Punch from a design standpoint, along with a surprise from the Emerald City.

“For melee systems we were superimpressed by *Arkham Asylum*. From a storytelling standpoint, *Uncharted 2* really showed us that we have a lot to learn,” Fleming says. “Outside influences can come from things like Seattle itself. Our lighting guys also do the skies in the game, and they'll go out during the day and shoot pictures of all the different weather patterns we have out here. One of the final ‘time of day’ skies in the game was modeled after photos our lighting guy took on his iPhone.”

Gamers will be able to see those Seattle skies (over a New Orleans-like city) in *Infamous 2* when the game releases later this year.



## WHAT IS?

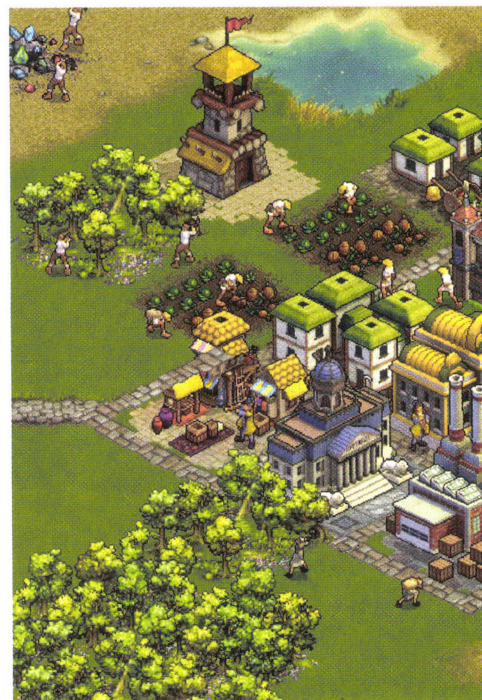
### The Demilitarized Zone

The game world of the original *Infamous* was influenced in large part by Brian Wood's sprawling graphic novel series *DMZ*. The comics focus on a civil war that erupts in the states and comes to a head in New York City, finding rebel factions desperately fighting against a ruthless military contractor called Trustwell, Inc., who torture and kill civilians who stand in their way. Though not a traditional superhero story, *DMZ* eschews the typical do-gooder tale to tell a more realistic tale of oppression and the people fighting against it. The influence can also be seen in the game's comic cut-scenes, as well as the team's implementation of the Karma system.



Streetcars and French Quarter-like architecture add the flavor of New Orleans to *Infamous 2*.





# Interview: SID MEIER

The Godfather of Computer Gaming has a new racket: *Civilization* for Facebook.

**S**id Meier's seminal *Civilization* series is one of the most important and influential game franchises of all time. Now Meier is poised to make the leap to social gaming platforms, as his former cofounder at Firaxis Brian Reynolds (the lead designer of *Civilization III*) did when he developed *Frontierville*. *GamePro* asked Meier about the challenges of developing for this new platform and how he plans to conquer the virtual world of Facebook with *Civilization World*.

**GAMEPRO:** How has developing *Civilization World* for Facebook differed from traditional game development and design?

**SID MEIER:** In terms of the development process, our team has used the same iterative approach to game design that we've used for

our traditional games. We start with a prototype and play and improve as we go. Since we're taking *Civilization* in a new direction with this game, there were lots of new ideas we had to try out, and it took testing with many people over a lot of time to pull out the best ideas. We're able to do things we've never done before, like collaborative gaming with friends, and really focus on the social aspect of gameplay.

**GP:** From what we've heard, you've taken a very hands-on approach for *Civ World*. How has the experience been coding and designing the game?

**SM:** I'm the luckiest guy in the world to be able to come in and write code for games every day. It's what I love to do, and thankfully, I've been able to do it for a long time now. Yes, I'm very hands-on with the design and programming

“It's been exciting taking the *Civ* experience that we're all so familiar with and making a game that will deliver a new way to play for *Civ* fans and a new kind of social game for Facebook gamers.”

—Sid Meier, *Civilization* creator

for *Civ World*. I created the prototype and have been working with our very talented team of programmers and artists here at Firaxis to bring the game to life. It's been exciting taking the *Civ* experience that we're all so familiar with and making a game that will deliver a new way to play for *Civ* fans and a new kind of social game for Facebook gamers.

**GP:** How will players be able to team up with their friends to work as nations within the game? What kind of Facebook functionality makes this possible?

**SM:** You can form a *Civ* with friends and acquaintances to build a powerful nation while you all compete against the other players in





the game. And you can use all the tools of social networking to organize a sneak attack on another nation or alert your teammates if some great new opportunity has opened up, like a new wonder or a really cheap unit on the market. *Civ World* is a persistent game so players will be able to pop in and out of the game as their time permits to manage their city and touch base with the other players in their nation. Players can chat in-game and send messages via Facebook to strategize with their team.

**GP:** How will gameplay in *Civ World* cater to the Facebook crowd? What are some elements that should entice more hardcore *Civilization* fans into playing it?

**SM:** Each game of *Civ World* will have an end, so there will be distinct play sessions with a most successful nation and a player with the most Fame points at the end of each game. We feel that people want to work toward a meaningful victory in their game.

Much of the design is based around collaboration with your friends and other people in the game. *Civ* players will feel very at home with the addictive strategy game elements, and Facebook gamers will have a chance to experience a deep, collaborative game on this platform. We've got wonders and technology and armies and different paths to victory, etc.

As far as complexity goes, the game consists of some basic concepts which are easy to learn, and the complexity arises from working in



collaboration with others toward a common goal. You'll need to think strategically if you want to win a game.

**GP:** Facebook has helped create a push for the casual-gaming market. How do you feel about casual gamers vs. hardcore players, many of whom are *Civ* fans? Is it hard to cater to both?

**SM:** Facebook has opened up a new place to enjoy games, and we think that's a great thing. We feel that the *Civilization* experience can be delivered in fun and meaningful ways on many different platforms and that all kinds of games and gamers can happily coexist. *Civilization* on the PC and consoles is different than the one we're bringing to social networking, but players will recognize many of the elements that have been in *Civilization* games before.

Even if your time is limited, you can still contribute to the success of your nation. And by the same token, if you want to spend a lot of time in the game, you'll have plenty to do.

**GP:** Since the Facebook platform allows for seamless game updates, can we expect that *Civ World* will be an ongoing project for you and the rest of the Firaxis team? What can we look forward to down the line?

**SM:** That's one of the great things about making a Facebook game. Once we launch *Civ World* and can talk to players and find out what they like, what changes they'd like to see, new content they want, et cetera, we'll be able to deliver it right away. We're very excited to see what directions the fans want us to go with the game and we have some ideas of our own we'd like to add down the road.



**“I’m the luckiest guy in the world to be able to come in and write code for games every day.”**  
—Sid Meier

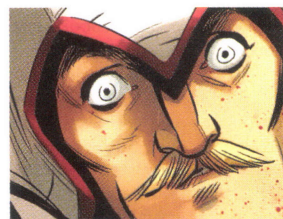


# The Art of Assassin's Creed: The Fall

*The minds behind this comic-book side-story detail how the Russian Revolution influences the art and tale.*

**WORDS BY DAVE RUDDEN**

In *Assassin's Creed: The Fall*, noted comic book authors/scribes Karl Kerschl and Cameron Stewart (who have collectively created stories for *Superman*, *Catwoman*, and *Batman & Robin*) have the daunting task of condensing a story on par with Ubisoft's three epic hours-long video games in just three 30-page issues. They explain how they brought the story of Russian revolutionary Nikolai Orelov and his modern-day counterpart, Daniel Cross, from consoles to comics.



## The Men: Nikolai

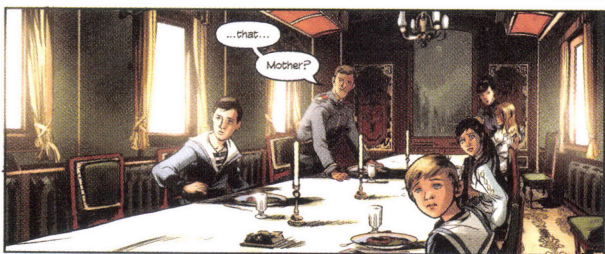
"The fact that [Nikolai] isn't tied to a game makes it extremely liberating in terms of writing a story. The reason we created Nikolai was because Altair and Ezio were very gung-ho and positive about their roles as members of the Assassin's Order. We wanted to do something that was a little more complex and ambiguous in terms of an assassin protagonist, because essentially, you're talking about a guy whose job it is to go around killing people for the 'greater good.'" —Karl Kerschl



## The Men: Daniel

"Daniel's own story parallels Nikolai's [tale] in many ways. They're both kind of troubled and looking for family. The first thing that occurred to us when creating an original *Assassin's Creed* story is that beyond the assassinations that everyone expects from the game, it's really about paralleling two time periods and how the two characters are interconnected. Otherwise, you don't really have a compelling story." —Karl Kerschl





## The Mythology

"Ubisoft gave us a list of time periods that were suggested, and there was something about Russia that seemed interesting and exotic to us. We were looking for events that occurred within the [Assassin's Creed] canon that we could explore, and we came across the Tunguska event mentioned in the first game. Based on that setting, we decided it would be interesting to deal with the lead-up to the Russian Revolution.

In our research, we came across the Borki train disaster [in 1888, which involved Tsar Alexander III and his family]. The true history of it was that it was just a train crash, but the cause of the crash was

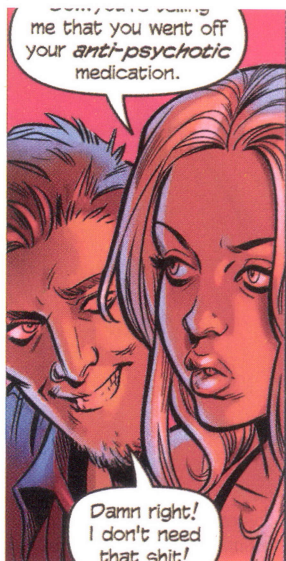
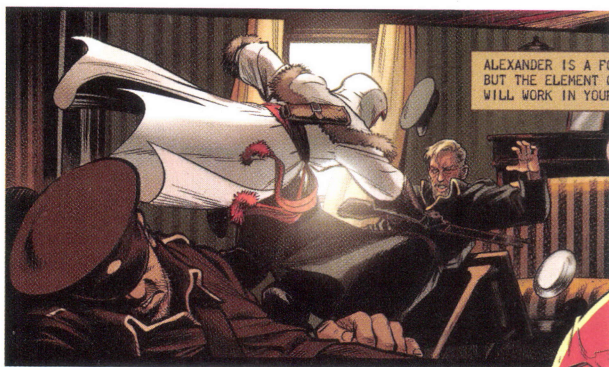
inconclusive. Alexander III had numerous attempts on his life at that time, so it seemed like a natural way to tie everything together."

—Cameron Stewart

## The Moustache

"We catch a lot of flack [for the moustache]—people think he looks dumb or whatever—but the thing is, when we were looking through these books on Russian history with old photographs, the thing that struck us was that if you were a Russian man at that time, you had a moustache. We tried to find photos of people from that era without them, but it was just the fashion of the time."

—Cameron Stewart

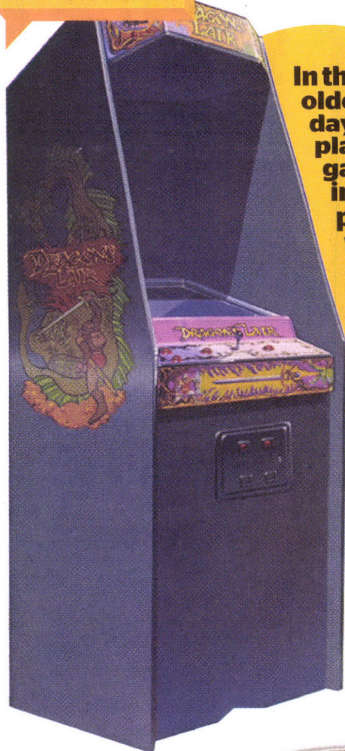




# THEN&NOW: DRAGON'S LAIR

AJ Glasser examines how the iPhone resurrected a classic laserdisc game.

IPHONE/LASERDISC



In the olden days, we played games in big plywood boxes

## // THEN 1989

### Follow the Flash

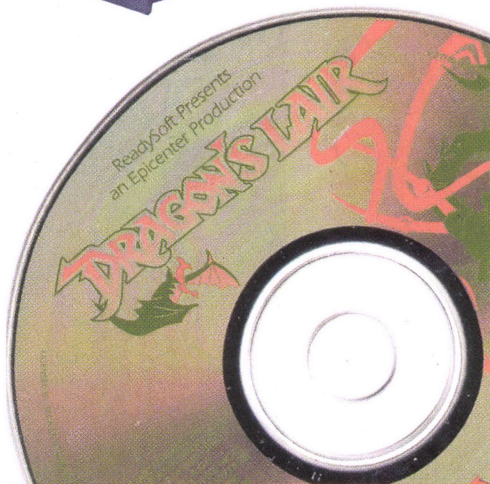
*Dragon's Lair* was one of the most successful laserdisc arcade games in North America in a time when arcades were facing tough competition from home video-game consoles. Part of the game's success came from its never-before-seen gameplay: Players control the reactions of the main character, Dirk the Daring, as he navigates a deathtrap-strewn castle en route to save a princess with quick button presses or joystick jerks to avoid deadly obstacles. It's essentially a proto-quick-time-event where the wrong button or direction results in Dirk's silly death scene and the right one rewards you with the next scene in the game. Another massive part of the appeal of *Dragon's Lair* springs from one-time Disney Studio animator Don Bluth, who had just come off the modest success of the film *The Secret of NIMH* (1982) to create the animations for the game.

### Where It Went Wrong

All that Bluth animation quality came at a high price of hardware. Most laserdisc players of the day were designed to play movies by reading the data in a linear path along the disc. But *Dragon's Lair* forced the player to seek new segments out of order at a rapid rate as they either failed or passed death traps, triggering the next animation. This created a high fail rate for the arcade cabinets—and no matter how good *Dragon's Lair* was as a game, the '80s still saw home consoles trump arcades, and its first "true" sequel, 1991's *Dragon's Lair II*, never performed quite as well as the original. Subsequent sequels went to home console PCs.

### Did You Know?

The dragon that kidnaps Princess Daphne doesn't have a name in *Dragon's Lair*, but a 1984/'85 cartoon series based on the game dubbed him Singe, and the name stuck for the game's pseudo-sequel, *Escape from Singe's Castle*.



Someday soon, the disc pictured here will be as antiquated as the arcade machine pictured above it.







## // NOW 2011

### Arcade in Your Pocket

Even before the iPhone revolutionized mobile gaming in 2007, Canadian publisher Digital Leisure peddled *Dragon's Lair* on DVD-ROM and HD-DVD to modern gamers. The game really got its second shot at life after hitting the iPhone with publishing help from Electronic Arts. Riding high on nostalgia from old-school gamers, *Dragon's Lair* debuted at No. 4 on a list of top-grossing iPhone games, exposing it to gamers who'd never even heard of it.

### What Works Better Now

The technology of the iPhone, and later the iPad, resolved the technical difficulties of the original laserdisc release, and new features allow players to opt out of the brutal arcade-era timing of the puzzles with a more generous "home" gameplay mode. The graphics received a mini-makeover for the

iPhone screen and controls; viewing *Dragon's Lair* via theater mode really shows off the game's visual improvements.

### Did You Know?

The *Dragon's Lair* Blu-Ray release reveals that Bluth wants to make a *Dragon's Lair* movie. Supposedly, he has a completed script all ready to go.

### How Far We've Come

Even without nostalgia to drive its App Store sales, *Dragon's Lair* has proven itself to be one game that didn't fade away with the arcade era that spawned it. *Dragon's Lair* brought us concepts we still see in games, and it was one of the first to feel like a true cinematic experience. So many modern games have cashed in on the think-fast appeal of the quick-time event that we often find ourselves returning to *Dragon's Lair* on iPhone to see if the game's got anything else we can learn for the next generation of games.



*Dragon's Lair* could've easily been called "1,001 ways to watch your hero die a silly death."





# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LOOTING





# JAMIE MADIGAN ON WHAT GOES ON IN GAMERS' BRAINS AND WHY LOOT DROPS ARE SO DAMN ADDICTING.

ILLUSTRATION BY  
KAREN CHU

**P**eople love loot. Games like *World of Warcraft* and most of the role-playing genre have worn out many mice in the search for fabulous prizes to add to gamers' collections, but finding cool new stuff and obsessing over one's collection certainly isn't new territory for humanity. When Roman Emperor Nero saw that Petronius, one of his courtiers, had acquired an epic piece of tableware in the form of a murrhine bowl, the ruler decided that he wanted it. This might have turned out to be history's first instance of ninja looting, but the petulant Petronius was so attached to his new acquisition that he decided to drink deadly hemlock from the bowl and then dash it to pieces, presumably shouting "/gquit!" while doing so.

## The Root of Loot Appeal

Thankfully, few of us go that far with our love of loot, but it's undeniable that gamers get a huge high out of finding new stuff, be it a gun with higher accuracy, armor with fire resistance, or a night-vision scope for our catapult. This can mean engaging in activities that appear absurd to outsiders, like meticulously searching the recently murdered corpses of countless foes and opening every single chest, box, barrel, crate, footlocker, cabinet, desk, and vending machine we come across in the hopes that *this time* we'll find something *really* awesome.

Why? What is it that makes loot drops so effective at enticing us to keep going when we could be playing something else that by all accounts should be more fun?

The answer, it turns out, is not so much the loot, as it is the loot *drop*. Of course, we love some equipment we find because it lets us do new things or do old things better. But it turns out that what *really* pushes the buttons in our brains is the act of finding

something new. Actually, that's not even it, exactly—it's the *anticipation* of finding something great. How do we know this? Look no further than the nearest neuroscientist with a lab monkey, and a fist full of electrodes.

## Unexpected Dopamine Freak-Outs

German neuroscientist Wolfram Schultz was conducting research at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland on the relationship between the chemical dopamine and Parkinson's disease when he almost accidentally started a line of research that could explain gamers' love of loot. Dopamine is a collection of 22 atoms that plays a huge role in regulating human decision making, particularly goal-oriented behavior and the pursuit of pleasure. When we encounter something we like—say a patch of berries or a goretusk liver—our brain releases dopamine. Brain cells that are sensitive to this chemical go bananas in its presence, which makes us feel good—maybe even euphoric. ➤



## World of Warcraft Leads to Real Wedding

UNITED KINGDOM—An Israeli woman and a man from the United Kingdom married after the two met in *World of Warcraft* in 2006. According to a post on the official *World of Warcraft* forums, Avlee from Israel and Erandel from the U.K. got virtually hitched in the game in 2007, and tied the knot for real in 2010. Avlee also wore a wedding dress designed to look just like the one her in-game avatar wore in the couple's virtual wedding. In the original forum post about the wedding, Avlee wrote that she "fell in love with [Erandel] because he was touched by the beauty of the Daralan dome. We're both roleplayers. Beauty really works for us." In addition to thanking Blizzard, Avlee also invited the developer to their future one-year anniversary.

## Gamer Pays \$335,000 for Virtual Real Estate

BOSTON—According to several online reports, *EntropiaPlanets* player John Foma Kalun allegedly purchased a "virtual asteroid space resort, bio domes, a mall, and a stadium" for a whopping \$335,000. The purchase was made from user Jon "Neverdie" Jacobs. Interestingly, *EntropiaPlanets* is actually an entirely free-to-play MMO.

Dopamine neurons in the brain also help us predict good things in life. Schultz and his colleagues discovered that presenting a lab monkey with a bit of fruit caused the creature's dopamine neurons to ramp up. They also discovered that when they repeatedly preceded the treat with a light or a sound, the neurons would start to fire when the monkey saw the light or heard the sound, but then remain relatively inactive when the fruit showed up. The system they had discovered was, at its core, about anticipation and trying to predict rewards based on what was happening in the environment.

This makes sense from an evolutionary perspective. In his book, *The Science of Happiness*, Stefan Klein notes that "whenever dopamine is released, it sets off the signal that the decision was a right one and that something good has happened." Our brains are generally pretty sensitive to patterns and adept at making predictions based on those patterns, especially when it comes to rewards. The thing is, we're even more sensitive to variations between what's predicted and what actually happens. Like an RPG player finding a +5 maul to replace his +3 hammer, if a monkey in Schultz's studies was suddenly presented with something it liked a little better (such as raisins or saucy pictures of lady monkeys), the dopamine receptors would flare up in ways that made previous reactions seem like dull sputters.

"The brain is programmed, at a very fundamental level, to seek out surprising and unexpected rewards," says author Jonah Lehrer, who writes about neuropsychology in his book *How We Decide* and in publications such as *The New Yorker* and *Wired*. "One can see this



phenomenon in action by looking at the response of dopamine neurons, which get much more 'excited' when exposed to an unexpected reward than when exposed to a reward they can predict in advance." Surprising pleasures, it turns out, are the most joyous of all because they highlight failures in our predictive predilections. It's like the dopamine neurons were sitting up and yelling, "Hey! There's something really good here! Let's obsess over that until I can figure out why I didn't see it coming!"

And so the tiny machinery in your brain goes to work trying to

hear, pictures you see, or even which cocktail waitress last walked by. But in reality, it's utterly random and by definition can't be predicted. Unpredictable events don't happen very much in nature, so your brain has evolved blind spots for them. More rational parts of your brain may understand this, but not the dopamine neurons. They're stymied, but that doesn't stop them from flaring up and saying *There's something here! Keep doing what you're doing until we figure out how to make it happen again!* And so people keep yanking the lever (or, in the case of most

## SOUND OFF

Tom Price, executive editor



### Confession: I Am a Loot Hoarder,

and considering the psychological ramifications, it worries me. I just can't seem to turn down anything in a loot drop despite my inventory bursting.

Prewar money? It's almost worthless, but I'll take it. Some dagger that's half as good as the one I have? I'm sure I can sell it in town for a pittance! Meanwhile, I walk around with more junk than *Sanford and Son*. Do I need to go on that show?

make new, updated predictions. Again, in a *predictable* world, that's a good thing, because it's all about figuring out how to get more of a better thing by learning what leads up to it. But surprise is key. "If we can predict it, then we can adapt to it," Lehrer continues. "And that's when the reward becomes boring."

### Pull Left Trigger to Pull the Right Lever

This is why slot machines work so well with gamblers. Your dopamine neurons are trying really hard to learn what precedes a jackpot in terms of what bells you

slot machines these days, pressing a button).

Once you get this concept, it's not hard to see the footprints of a dopamine-based anticipation system all over a game's design documents. Loot drops are in some ways just like pulls on a slot machine's handle, and some game designers are very good at taking this wrinkle in our grey matter and using it to reward continued play.

Since its introduction, Valve's *Team Fortress 2* has rolled out a loot system, part of which involves the random awarding of new weapons and other player customizations. When I asked ►►



## America's Earliest Loot Drops

Americans in the early 19th century didn't have much to choose from when it came to finding and collecting art, and those who wanted it generally looked over the ocean, with no small amount of jealousy, to the well-stocked homes of Europe. In 1839 gallery owner James Herring decided to remedy this by founding the American Art Union. For \$5 a year, people could join the Union and receive lottery ticket to win loot in the form of painting by one of the celebrated artists of the day. Owing in part to its speculative nature, the lottery was a huge success. Ninety-two paintings were given away in 1844, and within a few years, eager collectors were paying their annual dues for a chance to win one of 450 paintings. One can only assume that whatever the subjects of the paintings were, their armor sported huge shoulder pads and some rad particle effects.



## Man First to 'Beat' World of Warcraft

TAIWAN—A Taiwanese man became the first person to “complete” Blizzard’s popular massively-multiplayer online game, *World of Warcraft*, according to website MMO Champion. The man sent a screenshot of his player statistics to the website verifying that he completed all 986 achievements with his level 80 Tauren Druid named “Little Grey.”

According to the report, the *WOW* player killed 390,895 creatures and completed 5,906 quests, reaching an average of over 14 quests a day. After Little Grey completed the achievements, however, Blizzard released a patch adding a new “BB King” achievement, tainting the player’s otherwise perfect score. It’s worth noting that *World of Warcraft* technically can’t ever be “beaten,” as it’s continuously supported by new content like patches and expansion packs.

## MMO Player Wins Olympic Medal

VANCOUVER—Norway’s Kjetil Jansrud, AKA “NThraller” in the popular MMO *EVE Online*, won the silver medal for skiing during the 2010 Winter Olympics. Jansrud nabbed second place in the Men’s Giant Slalom event. In *EVE Online*, he’s part of the “hrr” corporation that’s part of the Morsus Mihi alliance and is said to take online player vs. player matches as seriously as he does skiing.



Mike Ambinder, who works on the *TF2* team and also happens to have a Ph.D. in psychology, about the game’s loot, he quickly pointed out that drops are only one way (along with crafting, trading, Steam achievements, and purchases through an in-game store) to get loot, but their purpose was also to encourage people to keep playing. “They act as rewards to players for putting time into the game,” Ambinder says. “We are still experimenting with optimum drop times and content ratios, but we do want to give folks a variety of items [to encourage them to play other classes and to take advantage of novelty effects], and we want them to occur often enough that players feel like the next drop might be just around the corner.”

Broadcasting the acquisition of a new treat to the entire *TF2* server also encourages players to keep playing. “When a player sees an item-drop notification for someone on the server, it can act as an indirect reward [or reminder of a reward] and seems to whet their anticipation for their upcoming drop,” Ambinder says. “We saw increases in playtimes when we added this feature, and again, the notification acts as an incentive for trading if a desired item is dropped.”

### Is This All Bad?

Now that you know that the soup of chemicals in your brain play a role in your delight over finding new loot, what should you do about it? Well, maybe nothing. There’s no harm in glee in and of itself, so if you’re enjoying the game, the loot-induced dopamine freak-outs you experience are just one more bullet point on the “pro” list. Go ahead and squee over those fancy new gloves for your Level 80 Shaman or that gun that fires





flaming penguins. And better yet, start anticipating finding something better.

But what if it is a problem? What if you look up one day to discover that you've just spent for hours—or days—in pursuit of some rare drop that may never come and won't be worth it when it does? Well, then you may look at things differently.

"Self-awareness is key," Lehrer says. "Once we know that these games take advantage of a deeply rooted quirk of human nature, we can begin to correct for them. Just because our dopamine neurons are excited doesn't mean we have to listen to them. We can always walk away." ■

## Enraged WOW Player Stabs Friend with Butcher Knife

AUSTRALIA—A college student named Zhenghao Shen was charged with using a chef's knife to stab his friend and nearly sever one of his fingers during a heated *World of Warcraft* game. ABC News Australia reported that the stabbing resulted from an argument between Shen and his friend over the volume of an online gaming session. Shen was charged with "intentionally inflicting grievous bodily harm," and denied bail by the court. No word on whether or not Shen's friend eventually forgave him.







# Twisted Metal

**SONY'S HOMICIDAL ICE CREAM MAN AND HIS BAND OF DEGENERATES RETURN TO RECLAIM THEIR CROWN AS THE KINGS OF CAR COMBAT.**



located in an historic brick building west of downtown Salt Lake City, an industrial warehouse that once manufactured hardware during the turn of the 20th century is now the home of *Twisted Metal*. Here at Eat Sleep

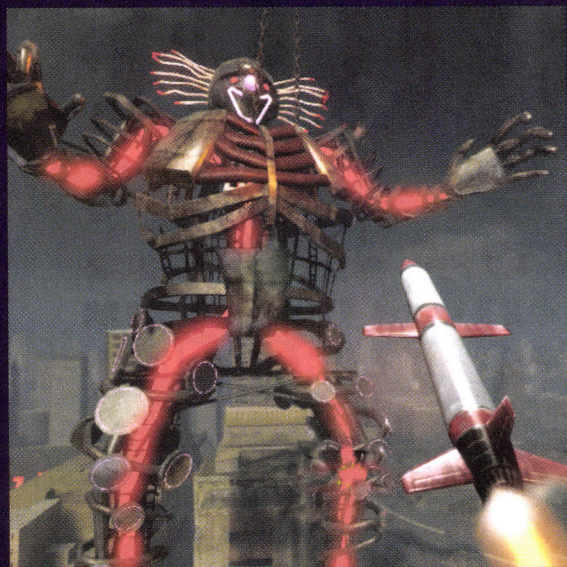
Play, a team of roughly 40 programmers, designers, and artists are quietly plugging away at the newest game in Sony's oldest PlayStation franchise: *Twisted Metal*. But the studio isn't always so calm. Next door, a freeway is being demolished. On some days, the screeching of steel rebar tearing and the shattering of concrete blocks becomes so intense that monitors actually shake, and an e-mail is sent out to the entire company for everyone to just drop what they're doing and go home. The deafening destruction of crumbling blacktops may seem like a fitting backdrop for developing a game about battling to the death in machine-gun-festooned armored cars, but the team assures me that this isn't a source of inspiration. "Most days, however, we don't have to deal with the noise," says Scott Campbell, the cofounder of Eat Sleep Play.

\* WORDS BY PATRICK SHAW \*





## TWISTED METAL



In Nuke Mode, gangs protect a mammoth metal statue created in the likeness of their leader while attempting to topple their enemy leader's statue.

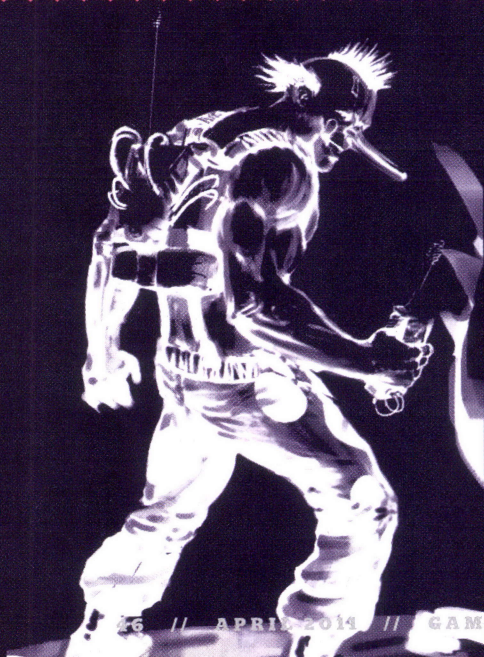


### THE HOUSE OF TWISTED METAL

Formed by many of the same people who worked on the original game, the team at Eat Sleep Play continues to refine and expand on their vision for *Twisted Metal*, a series that's largely responsible for defining the vehicular combat genre. *Twisted Metal* isn't the first video game to employ the idea of gladiator-style combat in weaponized vehicles, but it is the first to do it right. To this day, none of the franchise's competitors or imitators have reached the same level of success within the genre as *Twisted Metal*.

For the most part, the competition has been abysmal: Midway's *RoadKill* (66.3 percent on GameRankings.com), Sega's *Full Auto 2* (66.5 percent), and NCsoft's *Auto Assault* MMO (71.9 percent). Activision's *Vigilante 8* is the closest *Twisted Metal*'s ever had to a worthy competitor (85.7 percent).

And while the game has certainly matured since its inception, its fiction and core concept remain the same: In the future a lunatic by the name of Calypso holds a deadly tournament that blends the chaos of a demolition derby with the theatrics of a carnival. Contestants do their best to kill each







other in cars that range from motorcycles to ambulances, and the last person left gets one wish granted by Calypso. The new game also introduces vehicles like helicopters.

While many fans associate the *Twisted Metal* franchise with industry veteran David Jaffe, others have been just as instrumental in keeping the brand alive over the last 15 years. Co-founder Campbell is part of the core group that's been with the franchise since the very beginning, a gang that includes Creative Director Kellan Hatch and, of course, Jaffe, who oversees the new project. Campbell describes the trio's relationship as a kind of brotherhood in which they may not agree on everything, but they always have plenty of ideas on how to mold the series into something better.

## CREATIVE CONFLICT

Jaffe, who also directed the original *God of War*, has gained a reputation in the industry as being very vocal about what's on his mind. Campbell wryly describes their relationship working on *Twisted Metal* as "beautiful."

"It's healthy conflict," Campbell says, his smile fading. "Dave is very opinionated, and I'm tempered a lot by the team. I'm always working closely with the designers on *Twisted Metal*. When the collaboration between ourselves and Jaffe is working, we get the best results."

"But other times, Dave's over there [in San Diego], and Kellan and I are here in Salt Lake. Oftentimes, Kellan and I will try to get on the same page on something, and then Dave is brought in. It's up to all of us to decide





# America's Real-Life **KILLER ICE CREAM MAN**

While deranged *Twisted Metal* frontman Sweet Tooth is entirely fictional, Los Angeles once had its own homicidal ice cream truck driver. Skulking around the streets of California's San Gabriel Valley and East Los Angeles, Robert E. Stansbury lured victims into his truck with his ice cream and then either raped and/or murdered them. His victims include a 10-year-old girl he shoved into his ice cream cooler and later dumped into the Pasadena flood control channel, and a mentally challenged woman that he strangled. Stansbury died in 2003 on San Quentin State Prison's "Death Row" before he could be executed.



*Twisted Metal's* new locations are vast and richly detailed compared to past games' somewhat confined battle arenas.

on the best plan for what we're trying to do. Sometimes, it's a slam dunk, and we're all pretty close to being in sync, and other times it's all over the map. We reach a stalemate. But we're getting to a point in the project where those stalemates must be resolved. Some get resolved. Some still haven't played out yet.

"It's good that we're 2,000 miles away from each other," he adds.

This clash of ideas and perspectives is ultimately a good thing. "The result is you get two completely different perspectives," Hatch says. "Scott and I will look at things one way—and Dave will come out of left field with

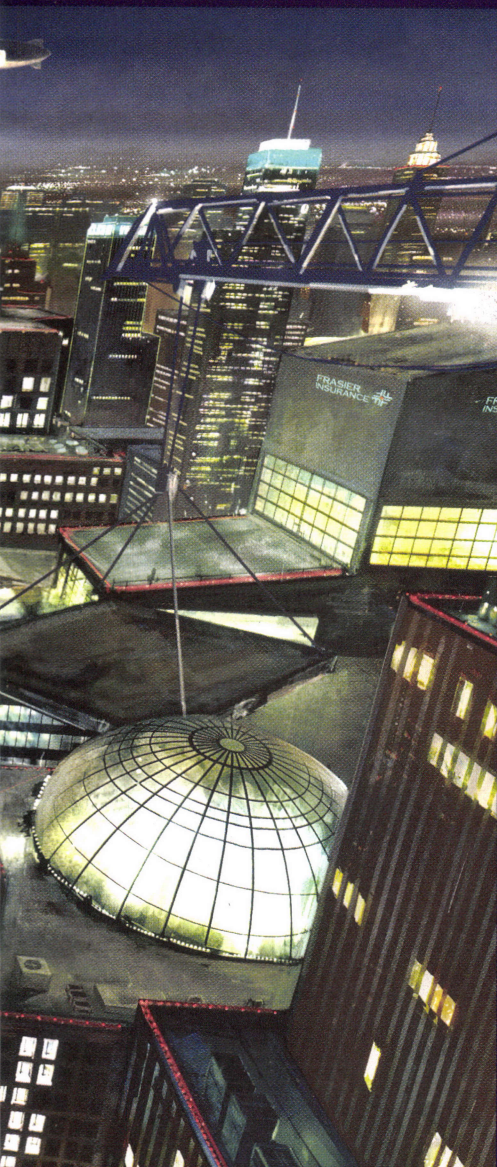
a completely different one. A lot of times it's something we never would have thought of."

## CUTTING DOWN THE CAST

An important design principle that plays into the creation of the new *Twisted Metal* is "boiling the experience down" to its most essential components. In terms of the brand, part of that "boiling down," or "strengthening," comes from eliminating the need to beat players over their heads with a profusion of new characters and disjointed plotlines. For this new game, they're wrapping the story around *Twisted Metal's* most







## SOUND OFF

Patrick Shaw, senior editor

### Twisted Metalhead for Life

The original *Twisted Metal* and its first sequel made a huge impression on me when it released on PlayStation in the mid '90s. Back then I hated video games involving any form of driving—this was when I was about 11 or 12 years old and much less open-minded about the kinds of games I was into. But that *Twisted Metal* shared more in common with traditional fighting games than anything in the racing genre turned me on to the series, which then eased me into playing other driving/racing games. Love it or hate it, *Twisted Metal*'s a remarkable franchise because they've been able to dominate the car-combat subgenre (*Twisted Metal 3* and *4* notwithstanding) for over 15 years. With any luck, the new generation of gamers encountering the series for the first time will fall in love with Calypso's ultraviolent tournament, as I did so many years ago.



iconic characters, which works in favor of the game's heavier emphasis on clan-based multiplayer. Since there's more to the game than just following a single character around through their own, isolated story-line, you won't get bogged down in a huge and convoluted cast of characters.

"A lot of people complain that we don't have as many characters this time," Jaffe says. "But what we've been able to do with these characters is put so much more attention on their history and story-lines. I think players will feel this reflects the very best *Twisted Metal* story and universe we've ever done because

of this emphasis on developing those characters."

Hatch speaks of a virtual graveyard where they buried vehicles and characters that didn't make it into the game, including a fighter jet fuselage with tank treads and a parade float.

### UNIVERSAL HATRED OF CLOWNS

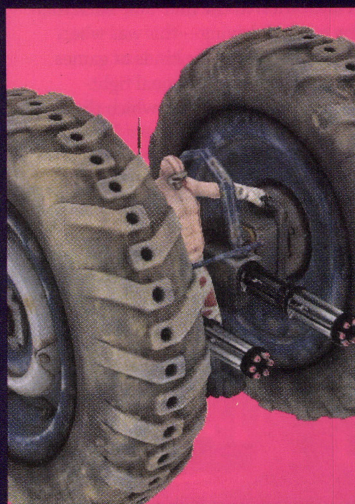
Sweet Tooth, of course, is among these pivotal characters in the new game. A bloated, homicidal clown that drives around in a filthy pink ice cream truck, he's the frontman of the *Twisted Metal* games. His grotesqueness goes against the notion that your

series mascot has to be cute—or even pleasant—to be successful.

While Sweet Tooth is the snarling face of the franchise, this wasn't always the plan. Hatch recalls that they never really intended for Sweet Tooth to be their marquee character; it just sort of happened that way. "In the beginning, we were all submitting lists of potential ideas and characters," Hatch says. "One of them was 'ice cream truck driven by demonic clown.' We went through and penciled out the characters we didn't like, and that was one of the characters that was left."

Hatch attributes Sweet Tooth's repulsive appeal to "a universal fear





and hatred of clowns." He explains how visiting a circus as a boy resulted in encountering a clown not so different from Sweet Tooth. "I remember the first time I ever went to a circus, and a clown was going around shaking people's hands, [and I was] thinking, 'Man, I hope that guy doesn't come after me,'" Hatch says.

Even the genesis of Sweet Tooth gave people the creeps. The original artist who sketched Sweet Tooth in the early '90s eventually decided he didn't want anything to do with a video game about a demonic clown. According to the team, his morals wouldn't allow him to work on a game that glorified such a villain, and

once he created the art and textures for Sweet Tooth, that was that last they ever heard from the designer. "I remember David Jaffe wrote this description of a severed finger hanging from the rear-view mirror of his truck, and that's where the designer drew the line," Hatch says, chuckling.

#### FACES OF DEATH

Sweet Tooth's relationship with Dollface—a cute female character with a creepy plastic face who drives an ominous 18-wheeler dubbed "Darkside"—features prominently in the new game. Campbell notes their intertwining story-lines are integral to *Twisted Metal's* main story arc, adding

that Sweet Tooth's in pursuit of her because "she's the one who got away."

Calypso is also returning to *Twisted Metal*. He's the demented mastermind behind the *Twisted Metal* tournament, and just like previous installments, he grants the winner one wish: a desire he then twists into something sadistic and often fatal. For instance, wishing to be reunited with a dead relative can result in Calypso twisting your words so that your family reunion takes place in the afterlife.

Hatch explains how Calypso is the embodiment of evil in their fiction, which is a tough role to live up to considering that the rest of the cast aren't exactly a pack of boy scouts.





Eat Sleep Play Cofounder Scott Campbell emphasizes that every *Twisted Metal* prototype undergoes “numerous iterations and revisions” before the final vehicle makes the game.

“*Twisted Metal*’s always been based around a *Twilight Zone*-like concept,” Hatch says. “You make a deal with the devil, and he’s always going to turn that around on you. Calypso’s our devil—he’s the one who takes advantage of whatever your desires are.”

Other characters participating in the new *Twisted Metal* tournament include Mr. Grimm, a skull-faced soul-collector who typically rides a motorcycle; and The Preacher, a former holy man who’s now possessed by a demon. Each of the characters in the new game also head up their own clans in multiplayer; Sweet Tooth leads The Clowns while Mr. Grimm leads The Skulls, and so on.

### A UNIFYING STORY

Jaffe explains how expanding on the *Twisted Metal* universe isn’t easy because there’s no real canon to build on. “It’s not like *Metal Gear Solid* or *God of War* where you can put it on a timeline and say, ‘Ah, this is where Sweet Tooth was born,’” he says. “We based the *Twisted Metal* series structure on *Street Fighter* and *Mortal Kombat* because depending on who wins, the story therefore changes.

The player is just as important in directing where the story-line takes them as the game’s creators. Within a single *Twisted Metal* game, Calypso can die, but he can also live. Myriad fates are possible for every character.

In the new game, however, everything ties together into one interconnected story-line that involves all of

the characters in *Twisted Metal*. “We went in, picked the best stories, and wove them into a cohesive story,” Jaffe says. “There’s a metastory on top of the actual characters’ stories. This is the first game where there actually is an official, singular story where all the characters fit into the same story-line. There are no contradictions this time. And when you’re finished with it, ultimately there’s this satisfaction that’s really an effective introduction for new players and a great way for fans to revisit the series.”

### RESURRECTING THE FRANCHISE

The last major release in the series, *Twisted Metal: Black*, came out a decade ago. While diehard fans of the series will likely embrace the new game, it’s also being exposed to a whole new generation of gamers who may not necessarily have the same reverence for the franchise as those who fell in love with the original titles.

“There’s always that terrible feeling of ‘What if nobody cares?’” Campbell says, noting that he was concerned about how fans would react to *Twisted Metal*’s return when it was officially announced during Sony’s press conference at E3 2010. Fortunately, fans responded to the news of Sweet Tooth and the gang returning with thunderous applause.

“We’re making a big statement,” Campbell says. “*Twisted Metal*’s back in a big way, and we’re reestablishing ourselves as the king of car combat.”

# History’s Earliest VEHICULAR COMBAT

## 1400s

### DA VINCI’S WAR MACHINES

Contracted by Duke Ludovico Sforza of Milan, Leonardo da Vinci created designs for several of the first weaponized vehicles. His “blueprints” include sketches of a chariot armed with four rotating scythes (it’s basically designed to grind up everything in its path) as well as a flying saucer-shaped tank with more traditional guns. The historical record shows that these vehicles were never actually used in warfare.

## 1909

### H.G. WELLS’ PROPHETIC FICTIONAL TANKS

In his short story *The Land Ironclads*, renowned science-fiction writer H.G. Wells (*The Time Machine*, *The War of the Worlds*) envisioned a world with enormous, 100 foot-long vehicles mounted with guns called “Ironclads.” H.G. Wells’ machines are particularly worth noting because they predate World War I’s tanks.

## 1915

### WORLD WAR I

The British Army created the Mark I tank in 1915 during World War I to aid in trench combat. The Mark I was originally introduced as a “land ship” or “water-carrier.” The name “tank” came from its resemblance to water-carriers.



# A TWISTED PAST

**STUDIO SWAPS, SPINOFFS, AND SLOPPY SEQUELS MAKE UP THE CHAOTIC HISTORY OF SONY'S LONGEST-RUNNING VIDEO-GAME SERIES.**

## 1979:

**David Jaffe** is born in Birmingham, Alabama. Aspiring to become a filmmaker, Jaffe eventually enters the field of game design. The first game he works on—*Mickey Mania: The Timeless Adventures of Mickey Mouse*—sharply contrasts with the violent titles he's known for today: the first two *Twisted Metal* titles and the original *God of War*.

## 1995:

Video-game studio **SingleTrac** is founded in Salt Lake City by ex-employees of computer firm Evans and Sutherland. In addition to creating *Twisted Metal*, the developer goes on to make *Jet Moto*, a racing series featuring futuristic, hovering jet skis.

## 1996:

A year after the original's release, Sony and developer SingleTrac unleash *Twisted Metal 2*. It expands on many of the features that made the original successful, while opening up its arenas to locations scattered around the world. It allows players to partake in such activities like **razing the Biffel Tower** to the ground.



## 1950s:

**Demolition derbies** become popular in America after promoters of county fairs across the country realize watching cars smash into each other can be just as entertaining as watching them race around a track. Demolition derbies serve as the foundation for *Twisted Metal*.

## 1976:

Based on Roger Corman's film *Death Race 2000*, where competitive racing of the future **involves running over the elderly** and other pedestrians for points, *Death Race* appears in arcades. It's considered the first "vehicular combat" game—but it doesn't feature weaponized vehicle modifications, which would become a genre staple. Bally Midway's *Spyhunter* (1983) is one of the first games with car-mounted guns.

## 1995:

*Twisted Metal* comes out on the original PlayStation. It brings the **vehicular combat genre** to prominence while introducing players to the carny-like cast of Calypso's deranged twist on destruction derbies set in the streets of Los Angeles. Calypso serves as both ringmaster and creator of the *Twisted Metal* competition, and he grants winners one wish—which he often twists into something horrible.

## 1998:

Contractual disputes between Sony and *Twisted Metal* developer SingleTrac lead to the publisher handing the franchise to 989 Studios. 989 releases two sequels, *Twisted Metal III* (49 percent review average on GameRankings) and *Twisted Metal 4* (68 percent), which are **reviled by critics and fans alike**. Even Jaffe, one of the series' lead designers, said, "They're good games; they're just not good *Twisted Metal* games."



## 1998:

With SingleTrac's separation from Sony, the original creators of *Twisted Metal* reveal a new, campier take on vehicle-based warfare: *Rogue Trip: Vacation 2012*. Highlights from the game include racers such as **the Meat Wagon**, a wiener mobile adorned with a giant Jason Voorhees-like hockey mask. It is driven, of course, by Richard "Dick" Biggs.

## 2001:

*Twisted Metal: Black*'s morbid cinematics spark controversy and are **censored** from the European version of the game. Interestingly, much of the violence in the cut-scenes is offscreen, and the game only hints at it.

## 2002:

A sequel to *Black* enters development. *Twisted Metal Black: Harbor City* would have featured a massive city of interconnected streets, but **it's canceled** after six of the game's developers die in a plane crash.

## 2008:

Years pass without a new game in the main series, and two *Twisted Metal* projects emerge and then quickly die in development: *Twisted Metal: Apocalypse*, which would've placed the franchise's vehicular combat in a postapocalyptic setting; and an urban, **hip-hop-infused** *Twisted Metal* game Jaffe likens to *Midnight Club*.



## 2001:

Pulling the series out of its slump, *Twisted Metal: Black* successfully relaunches the brand as **a much darker game** that receives a Mature-rating for its profanity and explicit violence. The game's a success largely because the team, Incognito Entertainment, is mostly composed of people who worked at SingleTrac on the original games, including Jaffe.

## 2001:

Shortly after the release of the most vicious entry in the *Twisted Metal* series, Incognito creates *Twisted Metal: Small Brawl*, a more **kid-friendly spin on the series** featuring remote-controlled versions of the series' iconic racers.

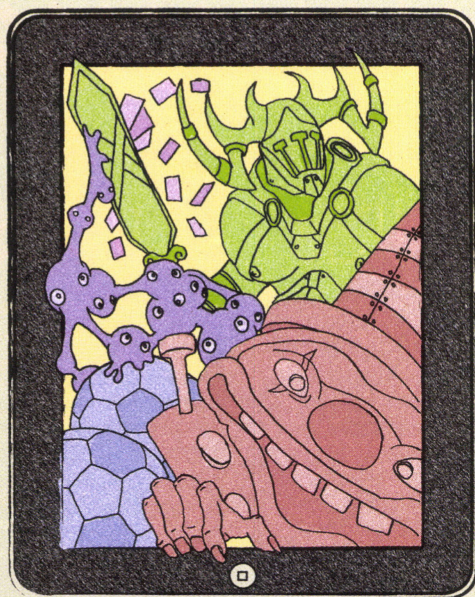
## 2005:

Nine years after *Twisted Metal 2*'s release on the original PlayStation, *Twisted Metal: Head-On*—**a direct sequel to the game**—hits PSP. Sony ports it to PS2 in 2008 with significantly overhauled visuals.

## Now:

Nearly a decade after *Twisted Metal: Black*'s release, fans begin to wonder if the series will ever return. But **an encrypted message** hidden in a documentary in *Twisted Metal: Head-On* gives hope, as it spells out "Twisted Metal is coming to PS3." The game is officially revealed at E3 2010, and this year Sweet Tooth, Mr. Grimm, and the rest of the gang are officially coming to rip you a new one in a game simply called *Twisted Metal*.





ONE YEAR LATER:

# iPad Gaming's PAST & FUTURE

Ryan Rigney looks at how gaming on Apple's tablet has drastically changed since its launch a year ago.

**W**hen the iPad debuted last year, more than 900 games were already available on the App Store. The flood of releases was both a blessing and a curse: For every good game, the store held 20 stinkers, a problem that iPhone and iPod Touch gamers had already become well acquainted with. But that wasn't the only thing familiar about the iPad launch. Quantity was high, and quality was low. The App Store had a few bright spots, like *Flight Control HD*, but many early iPad games looked like an assault on the iPhone by a steamroller.

## A Modest Launch

Most of the iPad games in the initial batch of releases were nothing more than upscaled versions of iPhone games. Sold as "HD" apps, the quality of these games frequently hinged on the amount of work developers had actually put into the iPad port. *Flight Control HD* represented the best of the HD apps available at launch, largely because developer Firemint had taken advantage of the iPad's larger screen to add same-screen multiplayer and new, larger levels. The HD version was a redesign, not a port.

Then you had games like *N.O.V.A. HD*; the game's set of virtual buttons and sticks work well enough for iPhone, but Gameloft made almost no changes to make the controls more intuitive on the far larger iPad. This made it nearly impossible to play *N.O.V.A. HD* and other games like it comfortably.

Another launch disappointment was *Drop7*, which had been freshly updated to support both the iPhone and iPad. *Drop7*'s a fantastic game on the iPhone, but blurry, pixelated graphics greet iPad owners

who boot up the game. The game looks essentially identical to the way it would if it hadn't ever been updated at all. Plenty of *Drop7* fans felt betrayed by the lazy port job, as evidenced by the negative reviews covering the game's official page on the iTunes App Store.

## iPad Gaming Today

Epic Games' flagship iOS title, *Infinity Blade*, reflects several trends in iPad game development, not the least of which are the massive graphical leaps that gamemakers are making with iOS development. *Infinity Blade* sports a well-designed button layout, looks gorgeous, and runs beauti-

game feels like it's always been meant for the supersized touchscreen device.

Perhaps the biggest change in the iPad development scene occurred when game-makers realized that games developed for the iPad don't automatically have to also fit the iPhone (and vice-versa). Indie-developed titles like Erik Svedang's *Shot Shot Shoot* represent some of the first iPad games that could only work on the larger, more powerful device. Whereas other publishers had simply looked to fit existing titles on the iPad, *Shot Shot Shoot* (a multiplayer competitive arcade game in which players attempt to launch rockets past each other's defenses) is something totally new.

**“The shovelware is still lurking, but the ratio of good-to-bad games has improved.”**

fully across all of Apple's mobile devices, iPhone 3GS and higher. It owes much of its visual impressiveness to the Unreal Engine, which Epic has begun licensing for use by other developers who want to make awesome-looking iPhone and iPad games. Another major strength: *Infinity Blade* is a Universal App and represents a growing tendency by developers to release apps that work well across all Apple devices instead of splitting games into a standard app and an overpriced "HD" app.

The release of PC cult hit *World of Goo* a week after *Infinity Blade*'s debut is another triumph for the iPad, both from a technological standpoint and as a beacon for mass-market "hardcore" games on the iPad. Developer 2D Boy delayed the game several times after its initial announcement to make sure that the iPad version ran the way they intended it to. And as a result the

## A Bright Future

The iPad still isn't quite as established in the gaming world as other platforms, but slowly and steadily, games created by people who understand this changing industry are emerging—and flourishing—on the App Store. Independent developers are leading the charge to create distinct, iPad-specific game concepts, and major studios such as Epic are pushing the limits of what the iPad can handle without relying on ineffective and ugly compromises like virtual D-pads or joysticks.

The shovelware is still lurking, but the ratio of good-to-bad games has improved, and as more talented developers set their sights on the iOS platform, the games should continue to improve. 2010 was the year that the iPhone came into its own as a game platform; 2011 is the iPad's year. **G**



# 5 MUST-PLAY iPad GAMES



## 1. Texas Poker



**Price:** Free

**Pros:** Excellent interface; match-making is extremely fast.

**Cons:** You can't play the game in offline mode.



## 2. Infinity Blade



**Price:** \$5.99

**Pros:** Great, *Punch-Out!!*-esque gameplay backed by some of the best visuals on a handheld.

**Cons:** The game doesn't look quite as good on an iPad as it does on the iPhone/iPod.

## 3. World of Goo



**Price:** \$9.99

**Pros:** Beautiful art; cool soundtrack; equivalent to the PC version, which is also awesome.

**Cons:** Will eat away hours of your free time.

## 4. Rage HD



**Price:** \$1.99

**Pros:** Looks fantastic; plenty of nasty, squishy things to blast the crap out of; smooth controls; sets the standard for first-person shooters on iOS machines.

**Cons:** A little on the short side in terms of levels; leaderboards and achievement-style targets would help increase its longevity.

## 5. FIFA 11



**Price:** \$9.99

**Pros:** Huge roster of 500 teams; smooth and intuitive gameplay delivers a satisfying and realistic-feeling game of soccer.

**Cons:** Graphics are a little chunky close-up; lack of statistical analysis; winning big tournaments feels a bit anticlimactic.

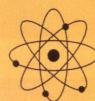




FEATURE

# THE REAL SCIENCE

OF



## DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

**ANDREW GROEN PUTS THE CYBERPUNK  
EPIC *DEUS EX* UNDER THE MICROSCOPE TO  
SEE IF ITS BRAND OF MIND-BLOWING SCI-FI  
IS IN OUR FUTURE.**

I've got to hand it to *Deus Ex*. Its science may not be perfect, but it goes out of its way to provide scientific backing for a *lot* of its strange ideas.

Most sci-fi games or movies don't bother to do this; rather, they sweep their scientific elements under the proverbial rug. Even games considered "intelligent" like *Mass Effect* and *Dead Space* have elements that they don't quite explain, lest the player realize these things are ludicrous and shatter the perceived realism. *Deus Ex* grounds its sci-fi in reality, even if its version of reality is a bit more fanciful than the real world.

From mechanical superhuman limbs to tinkering with the Earth's magnetic field, *Deus Ex* offers no shortage of good concepts for exploration, and I've assembled a group of experts to help us examine them.





01.

## MECHANICAL LIMBS

The most visually stunning element of *Deus Ex: Human Revolution* is the mechanical augmentations that its characters use to enhance their bodies and their abilities. Adam Jensen, the lead character, has arms and hands that are entirely mechanical. This may be visually striking, but it's also scientifically jarring. Most people still think of prosthetic limbs as little more than plastic peg legs. The reality is so much cooler than that.

The "C-Leg" is a prosthetic already on the market that's implanted with microprocessors that gauge speed, angle, and pressure 50 times per second and instruct the leg to react accordingly. C-Leg is so effective that amputee victims have less of a limp than "victims" of a stubbed toe.

"I think that the opportunities are unlimited," says Peter Rosenstein, the executive director of the American Academy of Orthotists & Prosthetists. "As we continue to understand how the brain works and how we connect nerves and brain impulses together, we will continue to develop more advanced bionic arms, legs, and hands that will bring incredible opportunities to people who need these aids."

But will bionic limbs ever function better than human limbs? Rosenstein offers the example of Oscar Pistorius, a double-amputee athlete who runs with the aid of prosthetic limbs. After consideration, athletic associations deemed he had an unfair advantage and wouldn't allow him to race against athletes without prosthetics. The future of better-than-human limbs may be just around the corner.



02.

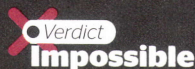
## THE ICARUS LANDING

*Deus Ex: Human Revolution* shows Adam Jensen leaping from tall buildings and landing safely on the ground without a scratch. Eidos Montreal explains this ability as an augmentation implanted in the lower back that senses when the user is in free-fall and activates a device that pushes against the Earth's magnetic field, slowing them to a reasonable speed.

At first blush, it sounds fairly reasonable. Nothing's wrong with the physics; the problem lies with the weakness of the Earth's magnetic field. It's strong enough to shield us from the Sun's tiny but deadly cosmic rays, but it's almost imperceptibly weak to a human.

"A compass nicely demonstrates how weak the [Earth's] field is," says Marshall Brain, the founder of the website HowStuffWorks. "We have to suspend the compass magnet on a jewel bearing, or float it on water, for the Earth's tiny magnetic field to affect it."

Even then, the compass is only responding to the "flow" of magnetism on Earth (it runs roughly north to south between the poles), not its push. Just how weak is it? Nearby electronic devices can disrupt compass readings. An airplane can give a stronger signal than the entire Earth. Magnetism fades out over distance, and we are very far from the center of the Earth, where the real magnetism is created.







## 03.

## HUMAN CLONING

In 1996, Scottish scientists shocked the world with their announcement that they had cloned a fully functioning mammal. Dolly the sheep became an instant phenomenon. In the years following, several hoaxes claimed to have cloned humans, but as yet no one has accomplished it.

But does the technology exist to create real human clones like the Denton brothers did in the original *Deus Ex*? The real process is much more difficult than it appears in sci-fi. Most of the process is very similar to regular childbirth. The difference is in how the cells are conceived.

The process is called somatic cell nuclear transfer. More simply, an adult creature (let's say a cow) has cells extracted (usually scraped from the skin). DNA is then pulled from those cells and inserted into an egg that has had its DNA removed. This way, the only DNA that can be copied when the cells replicate is the DNA inserted into the egg.

Cloning is still in its infancy. The rates of success are still only about 1-in-4. Scientists, however, have managed to clone cows, pigs, dogs, sheep, and even monkeys. Monkeys are extremely similar to humans genetically. If we can clone monkeys, there seems to be nothing stopping scientists from cloning humans (besides governmental regulations and human ethics, of course). Human cloning is still prohibited in most of the world.



## 04.

## VISION AUGMENTATION

Among the many innovations born from humanity's relentless pursuit of augmentations in *Deus Ex* are the augmented eyes in *Human Revolution*—where small cameras replace human eyes. This is a cool idea, but inputting a machine's signal directly into the brain is no easy task. But it's possible.

The technology is available to interface a camera with the human brain, although it will be a long time before we can use that technology for anything useful. "Vision [or any other type of perception] from any of these experimental perceptual systems is very limited at present," says Simon Giszter, a professor of neurobiology at Drexel University. "In the vision [technologies], there are usually kinds of phosphenes: sensations of light and dark. The quality and usefulness is currently fairly low. Some navigation in a room might be possible using window light versus door light."

Phosphenes are a type of phenomenon that can trigger a person to "see" things without light ever entering the eye.

"The most advanced devices are in very early clinical trials and can restore some vision, but not anything that is close to what we see," says Dr. Almut Branner, whose research involves bioengineering.

Will vision augmentation be in use in 20 years? It seems unlikely. The basic fundamentals, however, are valid and could potentially see use in the far future.







05.

## NANOTECHNOLOGY

In the original *Deus Ex* story—which takes place long after the events of the prequel *Human Revolution*—people aren't augmented with mechanical devices; they're augmented with nanomachines, tiny devices that can do very useful things at the smallest scales.

"A nanorobot could be useful in medicine—it would be able to, say, hunt and destroy cancer cells," Brain says. "As soon as you turn on your imagination, you can conceive of many things in that vein—nanorobots could augment the immune system, speed up healing, etc."

The possibilities are thrilling, and we're still discovering the full usefulness of nanotech. Could someone use nanomachines to augment human characteristics?

"In real life, right now, no. But the thought of there being nanomachines inside your body that could release things like adrenaline under conscious control is not too far-fetched," he says. "Could nanomachines bore through bones and weave in titanium fibers to strengthen them? Is there a man-made equivalent to muscle tissue that is stronger that nanomachines could install? Could nanorobots rewire parts of the brain to make you smarter or connect you to a wireless network? That's a long way off."

It will require decades of research, but nanomachines could be inevitable in our future. Their uses are virtually endless, and even the incredible ideas in *Deus Ex* may only be the beginning.



06.

## THE GRAY DEATH

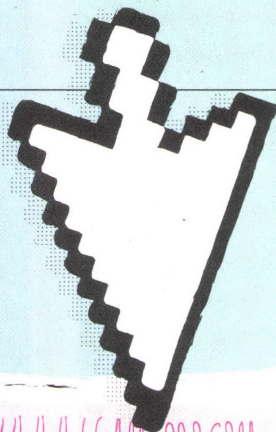
The Gray Death is a vicious nanovirus that can kill nearly anybody that isn't prepped for nanoaugmentation. Once it's inside a person's body, it infiltrates the body's cells and spreads. The modus operandi of a virus is to invade a healthy cell and then reprogram its systems. Afterward, the healthy cell no longer functions properly. Instead, it builds millions of copies of the virus until it bursts, releasing them into the rest of the body.

The implications of a human-created nanorobotic virus are potentially horrifying. The irresponsible use of nanotechnology could have a theoretical consequence. It's called the Gray Goo, and it refers to an event in which nanorobots would spiral out of control and begin making copies of themselves. Once they begin that process, they would be able to continue making copies, exponentially, until all of the matter on Earth is gone, replaced by a giant blob of nanorobots.

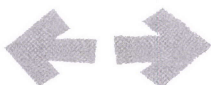
Suddenly, the Gray Death doesn't sound so bad. But once humanity has developed the technology to create a Gray Death-like virus, the technology will also be available to cure that virus. This is called "Ambrosia" in *Deus Ex*. If you can create nanobots to destroy, you can create nanobots to heal as well. Brain already informed us of the potential medical benefits of nanobots killing cancer cells. In this case it seems uncertain what would happen when the unstoppable force of the Gray Death meets the immovable object of Ambrosia.







**YOUR**



[HTTP://WWW.GAMEPRO.COM](http://www.gamepro.com)

# BROWSER

# BASED

# GAME

WORDS **BY** JULIAN MURDOCH

ILLUSTRATION BY WILL CHU



## → JULIAN MURDOCH DETAILS HOW THE FUTURE OF GAMING WILL BE MORE ABOUT ACCESS THAN PIXELS.

**M**ention browser games on a forum full of jaded hardcore gamers and you're likely to get snickers and guffaws.

But increasingly, games you access through the web aren't smirk-worthy—they're deep, evocative experiences you just happen to play from anywhere with an Internet connection.

Jay Kyburz, the founder and creative director of Iron Helmet Games, is well aware of the joke, but he doesn't think it's funny. He sees something deeper in the browser than your average *Call of Duty* player perceives.

His opinion should count. He came from 2K Games, where he worked on *BioShock*, *BioShock 2*, and the *XCOM* reimagining.

Kyburz eventually went indie and developed one of 2010's standout strategy games: *Neptune's Pride*, a backstabbing game of multiplayer galactic expansion and domination that grabbed a spot on many year-end best-of lists.

Kyburz's vision of a browser-based future matches that of many high-profile designers—Brian Reynolds (*Age of Empires*, now at Zynga), Soren Johnson (*Civilization IV*, *Spore*, now EA) and Sid Meier (*Civ Everything*, always at Firaxis)—all focusing their considerable design talents on technology much older (and more standard) than Kinect, Move, or the 3DS. Your web browser.

### No Fancy Hardware Required

"There are so many compelling reasons to be building browser games," Kyburz says, and he proceeds to launch into a laundry list of "fight the system" check boxes. "For a start, [browsers] are near ubiquitous. It's hard to imagine a home without some kind of Internet access and a browser," he says. "Gaming consoles just can't compete."

## BROWSER GAMES YOU CAN'T MISS

### Dragon Age: Journeys

**Where to play it:** [www.dragon-agejourneys.com](http://www.dragon-agejourneys.com)

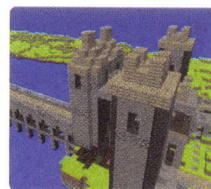
**What is it?** EA's free-to-play, visually impressive tactical-RPG set in the *Dragon Age* universe.



### Minecraft

**Where to play it:** [www.minecraft.net](http://www.minecraft.net)

**What is it?** An utterly original sandbox "game" where users build 3D objects and worlds using cubes.



### Neptune's Pride

**Where to play it:** [np.ironhelmet.com](http://np.ironhelmet.com)

**What is it?** An intergalactic real-time strategy game where battles often play out over weeks.



### CityVille

**Where to play it:** [apps.facebook.com/cityville](http://apps.facebook.com/cityville)

**What is it?** Zynga's latest social-game craze where Facebook users build and maintain cities.



### Travian

**Where to play it:** [www.travian.us](http://www.travian.us)

**What is it?** One of the first browser-based strategy games, *Travian's* an MMO where thousands of players battle and trade with neighboring villages.





## ✖ WHAT'S - A **BROWSER** + ANYWAY?

**W**hile the simplest browser games run off the same code that serves up your daily news, the line between simple, access-anywhere experiences and complex, retail-style experiences hardcore gamers are used to.

The first browser-gaming breakthrough is Flash, Adobe's rich media platform that's become almost ubiquitous but can lag in performance. The emerging HTML5 standard aims to provide rich media without intensive resource hogging, but even this doesn't cure all ills. "Flash and HTML5 are both limited technologies," says EA's Soren Johnson, who's better known for *Civilization IV* than for his web chops. "They leave a lot to be desired for developers used to building standalone, C++ games."

Several technologies are trying to change that. Flash is headed to its 11th release, and this should include a new set of 3D capabilities that should enable midrange, traditional PC game experiences (like shooters) on the world's most installed browser plug-in.

But Adobe's Flash isn't the only game in town. Microsoft's SilverLight is adding 3D gaming capabilities as fast as it can, and Google has been pimping their own plug-in to developers since 2009.

*Neptune's Pride* (np.ironhelmet.com)—Iron Helmet's first game—quickly became a strategy darling when it launched last year. Over 200,000 gamers signed up to play *Neptune's Pride* last year, an impressive feat when a core strategy title like *Civilization V* is rumored to have just scratched the half-million mark.

*Neptune's Pride* is perhaps the best example of a genre of strategy games only possible on the web—not real-time strategy, but long-clock strategy. A game of *Neptune's Pride* (or spiritual predecessors like *Travian* [travian.us] and *Ikarium* [ikarium.com]) takes weeks or even months to complete, resembling a 1980s era play-by-mail game more than a modern strategy sim.

As strategic games, *Neptune's Pride*, *Tribal Wars* (TribalWars.net), and browser favorites among strategy grognards are unique experiences. Diplomacy, conducted through in-game e-mail systems, becomes paramount; each game becomes more about people than systems. In an age of frenetic Xbox Live *Call of Duty* matches, thoughtful,

meaningful interactions with other players can be almost jarring, but the victories and defeats are supremely satisfying.

### Beyond FarmVille

From the bones of these long-clock strategy games, however, came another sort of game: the "-ville" genre dominated by Facebook. Largely removing the competitive multiplayer element, *FarmVille*, *FrontierVille*, *CityVille*, and their dozens of copycats recreate the constant angst of worrying about your growing empire but replace the meaningful strategic decisions with the mindless click-farming of resources. They have no goal but to get bigger while killing time. And for many players, that's what "browser gaming" means—timewasters. Something to do while you're waiting for a conference call to start.

But that's not where the future truly lies. An entirely different device is rapidly replacing these casual experiences. Fun little gems like *Solipskier* or *Cut the Rope* face a serious financial challenge in browser land, but







# “IT’S HARD TO IMAGINE A HOME WITHOUT SOME KIND OF INTERNET ACCESS AND A BROWSER. GAMING CONSOLES JUST CAN’T COMPETE.”

—JAY KYBURZ, FOUNDER, IRON HELMET GAMES

legions of smartphone- and tablet-wielding nerds are more than willing to shell out a buck or two to carry these experiences with them. Instead, the future of browser gaming comes in two distinct flavors—mainstream and indie.

## A New Era

Perhaps nothing anchors the mainstream more clearly than *Dragon Age: Legends*, the prequel to *Dragon Age 2* that’s launching this spring. Like *Dragon Age: Journeys* before it, *Legends* gives players a taste of the *Dragon Age* world before the “big game” launches. Unlike *Dragon Age: Journeys*, the new prequel comes to gamers with

*Civilization IV*’s Soren Johnson at the helm.

“*Dragon Age: Legends* is our attempt to make a social game that is appealing to a core gamer,” Johnson says, who’s been off the grid in a kind of EA social/browser strategy skunkworks since the launch of Maxis’s *Spore* franchise. The game has several hooks: It includes a castle-building system not dissimilar from a “-ville” franchise paired with a turn-based combat-adventure in the vein of a *Final Fantasy* or a *Dragon Quest* game. But it has a social aspect. “The other heroes who compose your party are literally your friends’ heroes. Thus,

the better your friends do in the game, the better you will do as well.”

For Johnson, he sees the browser being not about technology but entirely about access. “The big advantage, of course, is distribution,” he explains. “Players are much more likely to try something that can run in the browser over downloading a traditional app.” In a way, that’s a bit of a luxury. While the team behind *Dragon Age: Legends* faces plenty of challenges in getting as many people to play as possible, the biggest one—price—disappears.

The business model for independent developers without

a \$60 game to promote is a bit less clear. For the typical casual, Flash-based game, the model is generally to move out of the browser and into an ecosystem with customers more used to paying their way: the PlayStation Network, Xbox Live Arcade, or a smartphone app store.

Kyburz’s plan is to break the mold. The next game from Iron Helmet, *Blight of the Immortals*, breaks the long-clock strategy mold by putting players at least nominally on the same side, leading a swords-and-sorcery clan of men, elves, or dwarves against legions of undead. It’s a game he’s not sure would have made it through the “mainstream” process.

“There are no gate keepers in the browser world,” he explains. “We don’t need approval from Apple, Microsoft, or Sony to ship a game.” And ultimately, he thinks the game is always the most important thing, no matter what the business model.

“If you build a great game, you’ll get a great response.” Even inside a browser. ☐



SOUND  
OFF

DAVE RUDDEN  
COMMUNITY MANAGER

→ As a collector who owned nearly 1,000 games at one point, I was dragged into the age of digital downloads kicking and screaming. The sense of having a box in my hands was the very essence of gaming, so the concept of playing a browser game beyond a frivolous 5-minute fling is still foreign to me. Not only do they lack physicality, their availability is tied directly to the content provider. So if Zynga or Kongregate have a server snafu or—even worse—go out of business, my game and my progress are gone.

—Dave Rudden



# THE PRINCETON REVIEW

The top 10 graduate programs for video-game design—and how to get into them.

—Words by AJ Glasser

Last spring, *GamePro* and *The Princeton Review* teamed up to share the top eight video-game design undergraduate programs at colleges and universities in North America. As a followup for 2011, we've asked *The Princeton Review* to name the top 10 video-game design programs for graduate students.

[The Princeton Review collects this data via self-reported surveys sent to universities. Rankings are determined by The Princeton Review's evaluation process.—Ed.]

## #2 University of Central Florida Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy

- Location: **Orlando, Fla.**
- Number of Students Enrolled: **59**
- Student/Faculty Ratio: **8:1**
- Annual Tuition: **\$33,000 (in-state)/\$55,000 (out of state)**

# #3

## Southern Methodist University

The Guildhall at SMU

- Location: **Dallas**
- Number of Students Enrolled: **108**
- Student/Faculty Ratio: **7:1**
- Annual Tuition: **\$30,700**

## #1 University of Southern California Interactive Media Division & Computer Science (Game Development) Masters

- Location: **Los Angeles**
- Number of Students Enrolled (Interactive Media Division): **40**
- Number of Students Enrolled (Computer Science Masters): **90**
- Student/Faculty Ratio (Interactive Media Division): **2:1**
- Student/Faculty Ratio (Computer Science Masters): **23:1**
- Annual Tuition (Interactive Media Division): **\$26,050**
- Annual Tuition (Computer Science Masters): **\$19,800**

## #4 Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) Game Design & Development

- Location: Rochester, **N.Y.**
- Number of Students Enrolled: **17**
- Student/Faculty Ratio: **2:1**
- Annual Tuition: **\$33,234**

# #5

## Drexel University Drexel Game Design (RePlay Lab)

- Location: **Philadelphia**
- Number of Students Enrolled: **24**
- Student/Faculty Ratio: **4:1**
- Annual Tuition: **\$24,355 (first year)/\$22,050 (second year)**

## #6 University of Utah Entertainment Arts and Engineering

- Location: **Salt Lake City, Utah**
- Number of students enrolled: **22**
- Student/Faculty Ratio: **4:1**
- Annual Tuition: **\$15,000**

## #7 University of California at Santa Cruz Computer Science (Masters and Doctorate) & Master of Fine Arts in Digital Arts New Media

- Location: **Santa Cruz, Calif.**
- Number of Students Enrolled (Computer Science): **18**
- Number of Students Enrolled (Digital Arts New Media): **5**
- Student/Faculty Ratio (Computer Science): **4:1**
- Student/Faculty Ratio (Digital Arts New Media): **3:1**
- Annual Tuition: **\$12,214 (in-state)/\$15,102 (out of state)**





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# #8

## Savannah College of Art and Design

Interactive Design and Game Development

- Location: **Savannah, Ga.**
- Number of Students Enrolled: **98**
- Student/Faculty Ratio: **7:1**
- Annual Tuition: **\$30,960**

# #9

## Parsons The New School for Design

Master of Fine Arts in Design and Technology

- Location: **New York City**
- Number of Students Enrolled: **190**
- Student/Faculty Ratio: **12:1**
- Annual Tuition: **\$37,750**

# #10

## The University of Texas at Dallas

Art and Technology

- Location: **Dallas**
- Number of Students Enrolled: **126**
- Student/Faculty Ratio: **5:1**
- Annual Tuition: **\$10,248 (in-state) / \$18,544 (out-of-state)**

The Princeton Review selected the following schools as Honorable Mentions in the graduate program rankings:

**DePaul University**  
(Chicago)

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology**  
(Cambridge, Mass.)

**Academy of Art University**  
(San Francisco)

**Georgia Institute of Technology**  
(Atlanta)

**DigiPen Institute of Technology**  
(Redmond, Wash.)

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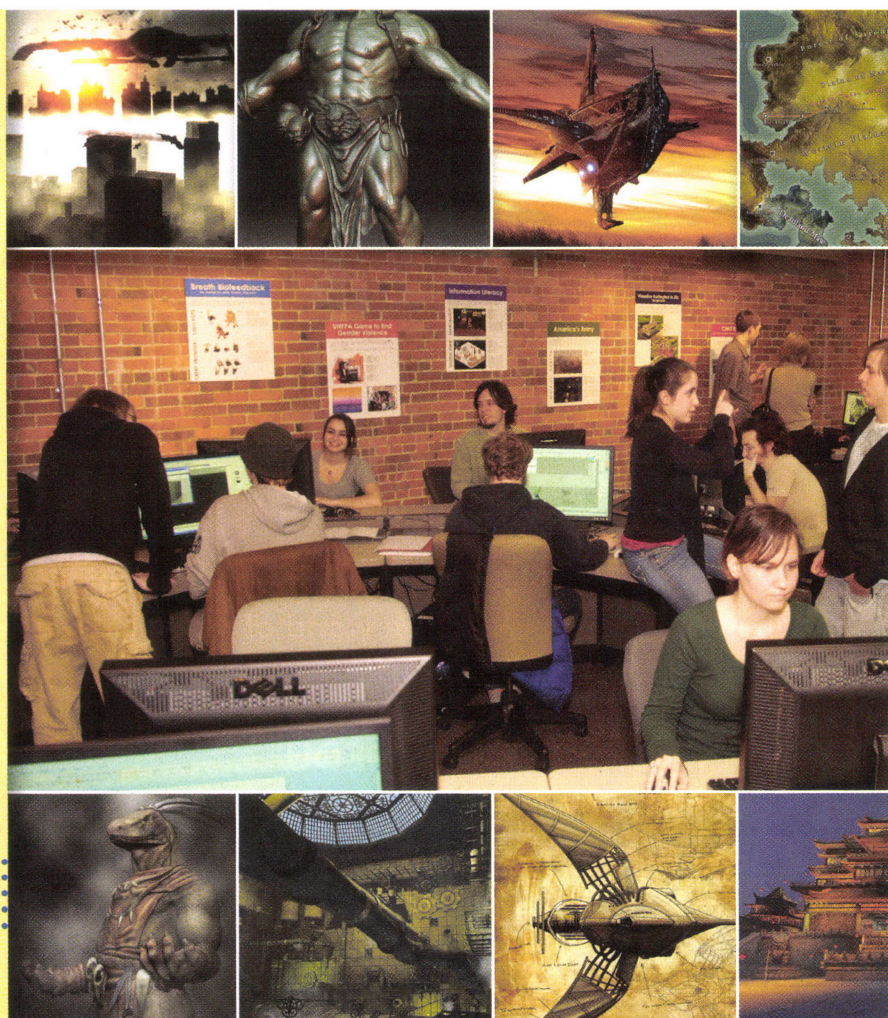
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# #3

## DigiPen Institute of Technology

- Location: **Redmond, Wash.**
- Number of Students Enrolled: **871**
- Student/Faculty Ratio: **12:1**
- Annual Tuition: **\$515 per credit**

# #1

## University of Southern California, Interactive Media Division & Computer Science (Game Development)

- Location: **Los Angeles**
- Number of Students Enrolled (Interactive Media Division): **16,445**
- Number of Students Enrolled (Computer Science Masters): **16,445**
- Student/Faculty Ratio (Interactive Media Division): **9:1**
- Student/Faculty Ratio (Computer Science Masters): **9:1**
- Annual Tuition (Interactive Media Division): **\$40,384**
- Annual Tuition (Computer Science Masters): **\$40,384**

# #4

## The Art Institute of Vancouver, Game Art & Design, Visual & Game Programming, Animation & Games

- Location: **Vancouver, BC, Canada**
- Number of Students Enrolled: **1,637**
- Student/Faculty Ratio: **15:1**
- Annual Tuition: **\$23,400 (domestic) / \$25,980 (international)**

# #2

## University of Utah, Entertainment Arts and Engineering

- Location: **Salt Lake City, Utah**
- Number of Students Enrolled: **22,260**
- Student/Faculty Ratio: **15:1**
- Annual Tuition: **\$5,491 (in-state) / \$19,230 (out-of-state)**

# #5

## Michigan State University, Specialization in Game Design and Development

- Location: **East Lansing, Mich.**
- Number of Students Enrolled: **36,224**
- Student/Faculty Ratio: **17:1**
- Annual Tuition: **\$12,187.50 (in-state) / \$30,030 (out-of-state)**

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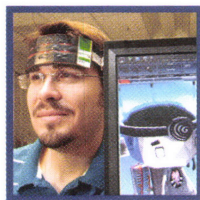
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#6

**Worcester Polytechnic Institute,**  
Interactive Media and  
Game Development (IMGD)  
▶ Location: **Worcester, Mass.**  
▶ Number of Students Enrolled: **3,391**  
▶ Student/Faculty Ratio: **14:1**  
▶ Annual Tuition: **\$38,140**

#8

**Champlain College, Game Design,**  
Game Art & Animation, Division of  
Communication and Creative Media

- ▶ Location: **Burlington, Vir.**
- ▶ Number of Students Enrolled: **1,928**
- ▶ Student/Faculty Ratio: **16:1**
- ▶ Annual Tuition: **\$22,550**

#9

**Rochester Institute of Technology,**  
Game Design & Development

- ▶ Location: **Rochester, N.Y.**
- ▶ Number of Students Enrolled: **13,258**
- ▶ Student/Faculty Ratio: **14:1**
- ▶ Annual Tuition: **\$30,282**

#7

**Drexel University,**  
Drexel Game Design  
(RePlay Lab) Loca-  
tion:  
**Philadelphia**

- ▶ Number of Students  
Enrolled: **13,069**
- ▶ Student/Faculty  
Ratio: **9:1**
- ▶ Annual Tuition:  
**\$30,900**

#10

**Becker College,**  
Game Design & Game  
Programming

- ▶ Location: **Worcester, Mass.**
- ▶ Number of Students  
Enrolled: **1,751**
- ▶ Student/Faculty Ratio: **18:1**
- ▶ Annual Tuition: **\$25,530**

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(Portsmouth, Ohio)

**Georgia Institute  
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(Atlanta)

**North Carolina  
State University**  
(Raleigh)

**Rensselaer  
Polytechnic Institute**  
(Troy, New York)

**Savannah College of  
Art and Design**  
(Savannah, Ga.)

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## Critical Darlings, Retail Bummers

*On the eve of their PlayStation 3 remakes, Jaz Rignall explores why Team Ico's pair of critically acclaimed games never caught on with the masses.*

**W**hen Sony announced at last year's Tokyo Game Show that Team Ico had decided to give their pair of epic games, *Ico* and *Shadow of the Colossus*, a full high-definition makeover for PS3, many of the team at

GamePro Towers was excited, to say the least. And it appears we're not the only ones: These games received critical acclaim when they first appeared on PS2, each garnering rave reviews around the globe. But despite much high praise, the

games have achieved what can only be described as moderate commercial success. So what is it about these games that make them such a darling of the critics but have left them with the label of "cult" classics rather than—if their ratings were any indicator of quality—being runaway commercial successes?

### MINIMALISM AND STORY-LINE

A shared theme of Team Ico's pair of releases—and their forthcoming *The Last Guardian*—is a strong narrative and a protagonist motivated by a sympathetic secondary character in peril.

Team Ico games also feature what can only be described as minimalist gameplay. Where most games fill their worlds with a myriad of monsters and hazards with barely any space between dangers and denizens, Team Ico games are a lot more open, and characters have a large amount of space to explore. Because of this, the pace of their gameplay is often a little slower than most action-adventure games and takes on an almost cinematic quality. The way in which Team Ico articulates these games enhances this. Stunningly drawn locations, carefully rendered and beautifully animated characters, and lighting play



# CRUCIAL TIPS ON GETTING INTO GAME DESIGN GRAD PROGRAMS



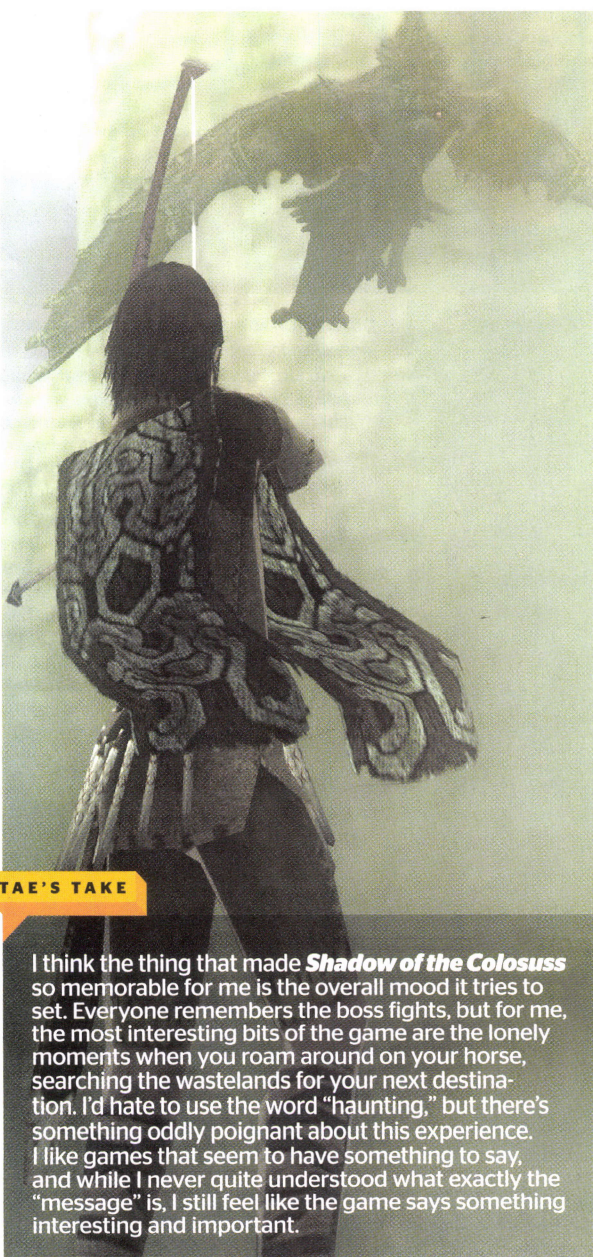
Octodad started as a student project; it's now an award-winning game.

every undergrad goes through—the doubt many have about if they picked the right program, the right career. “If not,” he says, “keep trying. Keep going.”

Toward the end of your graduate career, you're going to start thinking about how to get a job. Instructors and professors can help a bit—as can an internship with a game developer. But it's better to know what a studio head such as Haden Blackman wants when he interviews candidates fresh out of school for positions at his new company, Fearless Studios.

The most common roles Blackman looks to fill at his studio are art and engineering positions. All applicants need a résumé and a portfolio (or demo reel)—and the engineers

## ANALYSIS



### TAE'S TAKE

I think the thing that made **Shadow of the Colossus** so memorable for me is the overall mood it tries to set. Everyone remembers the boss fights, but for me, the most interesting bits of the game are the lonely moments when you roam around on your horse, searching the wastelands for your next destination. I'd hate to use the word “haunting,” but there's something oddly poignant about this experience. I like games that seem to have something to say, and while I never quite understood what exactly the “message” is, I still feel like the game says something interesting and important.

a huge role in imbuing a certain visual quality to the proceedings, and the soundscaping further enhances the games' atmospheres that feel almost melancholic in nature. These games look and feel very artistic, and the action plays out in a mellow way that bucks the norm. That's not to say the games aren't action-packed—they definitely have setpieces that are as adrenaline-pumping as any other game—it's just that each game has periods

in between these pieces where the player can think, explore, and become immersed.

It's this bucking of the norm that might put off some gamers. Where many want immediate, visceral action from their gaming, Team Ico's games play out far more slowly. Players need to explore, get their bearings, understand their mission, and work out what to do. It's thoughtful, not immediate gratification, gaming, and it

plays out like a slower-paced but nevertheless riveting art-house movie rather than a Michael Bay 'splotion-fest.

### ICO: MINIMAL PLATFORMING

On the face of it, *Ico* is a platform game. But it's a minimalist platform game that emphasizes puzzles and exploration over hard-and-fast running and gunning. Ultimately, the game is an escape quest where the eponymous Ico must help Yorda, a young girl, find her way out of the fortress in which both are imprisoned. The game plays out with a distinct narrative story-line, and despite having little in the way of dialogue, *Ico* does an excellent job of connecting the emotional peril of the main protagonists with the player's motivations. The adventure builds in intensity as the player travels through the game, and it reaches an epic setpiece climax that leads to an ending that—for players who found themselves attached to the characters—has more emotional impact than most conventional video games.

### SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS: OPEN-ENDED

*Shadow of the Colossus* is the spiritual successor to *Ico*. Once again, the player steps into the shoes of a young man who's on a mission: this time to save the life of a young girl. Similar to Team Ico's previous offering, fantastic animation, terrific lighting, and a cinematic atmosphere are once again the order of the day. And just like *Ico*, the gameplay is minimal—to say the least. The game plays out on a huge peninsula that's completely deserted except for the 16 enormous colossi that reside there. The object of the game is to defeat each one, so in many respects, *SOTC* is a game with 16 boss battles and no trash mobs.

This definitely transcends the usual gaming conventions. Most games endlessly spit out things to kill you to pass the time between boss battles: *SOTC* has none of that. Instead, players explore the vast expanse of the peninsula, using a horse to try to get a better understanding of where they are and what they're doing, choosing to engage the next boss when they're good and ready. And even in that exploration aspect, Team Ico's design bucks regular video-gaming conventions by not providing







anything conclusive or definitive; players instead receive scant clues and hints to make them think about and interpret the environment, its locations, and ruins. Answers aren't served up on a plate; instead, the player simply finds more questions to pose and ponder. While many players might not enjoy this open-ended exploration and mystery, for those who love the atmosphere, the feeling of being the only person standing in a strange, epic, and incredibly atmospheric place, *SOTC* absolutely delivers an amazing experience that really makes you think.

### **BIGGEST. MONSTERS. EVER.**

*SOTC* has some of the biggest bosses yet seen in a game, ranging from "look at the size of that thing" to "I have a very bad feeling

about this." Some monsters are the size of large buildings and present themselves as individual puzzle games unto themselves. Defeating each massive monster requires the player to climb, jump, and navigate around each one until you discover their weaknesses—and exploit them. While it's certainly action-packed and exciting, some of these boss battles require a degree of thought and lateral thinking because their solutions aren't always immediately apparent. But like all good puzzle games, the clues and answers are right in front of you: It's just not always obvious. And again, it's this thoughtfulness that put off players who like their action served hot and fast—but delights those who like to savor the moment and believe victories should be the reward of work.

### **JAZ'S TAKE**

Most of the games I like are straight-up visceral action—excessive cut-scenes and slow, drawn-out action tend to make my attention wander. I don't enjoy *Metal Gear Solid*, for example, because the cut-scenes are too long, and much of the gameplay is just too pedestrian. But surprisingly for me, I love both Team Ico games. Their environments are so well designed, and look so damn cool, that I really enjoyed wandering around them, soaking up their atmosphere and trying to uncover their mysteries. In a way, the exploration itself is a game. Sure, it's not action-packed or exciting, but I found it incredibly compelling and immersive. Couple that with the strangely sad and melancholic story-lines and characters that you can build an emotional bond with and you have a pair of games that, to me, are obvious why they're so loved by critics. They are intelligent, thoughtful, and brilliantly designed, and they can be savored by those who have a true appreciation of the art of game design.







## CRITICS' RATING

METACRITIC:

91

## SCORES:

GAMEPRO	★★★★★
IGN	4.5/5
GameSpot	9.4/10
Edge	9/10
GameSpy	4.5/5
PC Gamer	98/100
Game Informer	9/10

# Crysis

*The best game only a very few could play.*

## PC

- Developer: Crytek Frankfurt
- Publisher: EA
- ESRB: M

Released back in November 2007, *Crysis* was the supermodel of the video-game world: It was absolutely beautiful, but the average gamer didn't have what it took to possess it. Developer Crytek pulled out all of the stops for their highly anticipated follow-up to the critically acclaimed *Far Cry*, but the results, which were stunning, came at a price its potential fanbase couldn't afford to pay.

Critics were quick to praise the game's visuals, including *GamePro's* Chris Morell, who called *Crysis*, "the most photorealistic game ever created." Most outlets echoed this sentiment,

including *PC Gamer*, which called it a "technological marvel that eclipses every other shooter" released that year. But there was one huge caveat to all the praise: The game needed to be turned up to its highest settings. This required a powerful gaming PC with for-the-time bleeding-edge components like DirectX 10-capable videocards and massive amounts of RAM; gamers who didn't own a "PC from the future" had to sacrifice visual fidelity for performance, which is like buying a Ferrari and driving the speed limit.

*Crysis* still did very well, selling over 3 million copies, but Crytek obviously saw the need for balance, which they addressed with *Warhead*, a standalone expansion optimized to allow lower-end computers to run it properly. As a testament to their programming prowess, the developer was able to produce a game that, according

to IGN's Jason Ocampo, "not only runs better than *Crysis* [but] looks better than *Crysis*."

But while Crytek toned down *Crysis's* brutal hardware requirements, they failed to undo the public relations damage: While almost everyone agreed that the company's CryEngine was a powerful and robust technology, the perception remained that it was too costly from a performance standpoint. This may be part of the reason why few developers have licensed the company's tech for third-party applications, relying instead on competing engines like Unreal and Source.

But it's far too early to count Crytek out of the game: Their newly unveiled CryEngine 3

promises even more stunning visuals while reducing hardware overhead, which should help it become a more popular choice for developers. The PS3 and Xbox 360 versions of *Crysis 2* are also releasing concurrently with the PC version, which should expand Crytek's audience even further. If the sequel can succeed in being both beautiful and smooth, it may finally allow us to take home the supermodel we've all dreamed of dating. —**Jeremy Signor**



## TOM PRICE, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

"While I appreciate high-end visual fidelity as much as the next gamer, I felt intimidated even thinking about playing *Crysis* on my older gaming rig. Who wants to see only part of what a game is capable of? Unfortunately, it's a reoccurring issue for gamers to get past when choosing their platform. When you're playing on console, you at least know it looks the same for you as it does for everyone else. That just seems more democratic."





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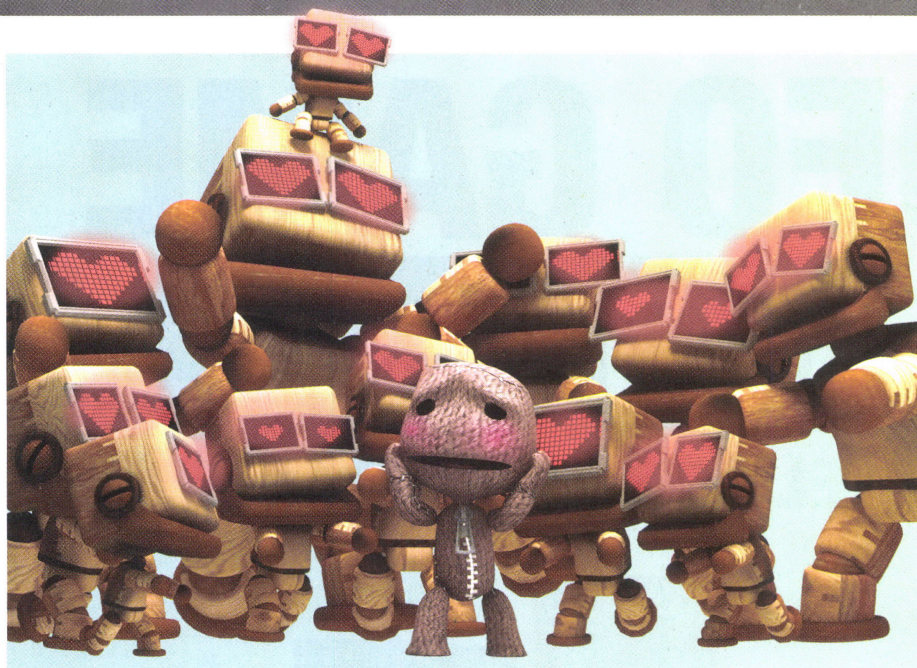
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## CRITICS' RATING

METACRITIC:

91

## SCORES:

GAMEPRO	★★★★★
1UP	A-
Joystiq	5/5
Game Informer	9.5/10
GameSpot	9/10
GameSpy	4/5
A.V. Club	B

## Little Big Planet 2

*Will the bigger tools spawn little masterpieces?*

## PS3

- Developer: Media Molecule
- Publisher: SCEA
- ESRB: E

**L**ittleBigPlanet took a big risk by hanging much of its appeal on the creativity and ingenuity of players, but that calculated decision arguably paid off as the community has turned out more than 3 million downloadable stages since the game's 2008 release.

Within weeks, players were uploading inventive re-creations of *Shadow of the Colossus* and *Gradius* levels, along with a working calculator built from more than 1,600 pieces. And after a few months, more elaborate creations—including a functional tic-tac-toe board and

a full remake of *Contra*—further demonstrated the flexibility of the toolset.

But *LittleBigPlanet 2* tackles a far more ambitious goal, allowing players to create their own little games in almost any genre—not just side-scrolling platformer levels. Developer Media Molecule has demonstrated a wide variety of creations, including shooters, racing games, and even a real-time strategy experience, but with a larger array of possibilities comes more robust and complicated tools. Just how flexible are the creation features, and how long will it take the community to turn out truly impressive games?

"The level of ingenuity on display in the limited beta alone was already off the charts. Action-RPGs, flight simulators, auto racing, tower defense, sketch comedy, moody adventures: You name it—it's already out there in

some form. Hell, some intrepid soul even worked out how to make a primitive first-person shooter," says Cameron Lewis in *GamePro*'s review. "If these are the things a limited subset of part-time artisans produced before the game was even released, one can only imagine the amazing things amateur creators will set loose upon the world in the weeks, months, and years ahead."

Luckily, most reviewers believe the enhanced tools should not impede the development of excellent user-generated experiences; instead, they'll lead to even better results. "The tools you use for creating stuff in *LittleBigPlanet 2*, from levels to individual devices, are extremely easy to understand and utilize," says Eric Neigher for 1UP. "You can do just about anything you want with the Sixaxis controller, and it's wonderfully easy to place objects, alter control schemes, and make small modifications thanks to the smart interface and precise controls."

"The game's exhaustive, but not exhausting, tutorial process does a great job of succinctly

showing you the ropes," says Joystiq's Griffin McElroy. "Almost all of the creation tools from the first game have been completely overhauled, allowing for a much more streamlined level-design process. That doesn't mean that your encyclopedic knowledge of said tools' inner working is forfeit—rather, it just means that creations that were once impossible are now possible, and creations that were once possible are now incredibly simple."

Assuming average players take to the creation tools like reviewers, the *LittleBigPlanet 2* servers should be filled with fantastically unique experiences by the time you read this, giving the sequel a tremendous shelf life. Will you play the next user-generated masterpiece—or will you create it? —**Andrew Hayward**

## THE BOTTOM LINE

### Report Card:

LittleBigPlanet (PS3): 95  
LittleBigPlanet (PSP): 85

||||| Sackboy's  
Prehistoric Moves: 66







#### CRITICS' RATING

METACRITIC:

90

#### SCORES:

GAMEPRO	★★★★★
1UP	B+
Edge	8/10
Paste	7.6/10
IGN	9/10
Engadget	9/10
Gamezebo	4.5/5

## Infinity Blade

Did Epic unsheathe the App Store's secret weapon?

### iOS

- Developer: Chair Entertainment
- Publisher: Epic Games
- ESRB: M

Though the iPhone and iPad host a number of tremendously successful original games—among them smash hits like *Angry Birds* and *Pocket God*—very few are ever positively compared to their bigger-budget console counterparts. Instead, critical appraisals of such games are typically centered on how fun or addictive the gameplay is, as this is all many players expect from iOS games. But *Infinity Blade* is markedly different, in part due to its heritage, but primarily for how it delivers a rich, full-bodied experience

amid the more traditional App Store offerings.

Hailing from Chair Entertainment, the Epic Games subsidiary behind the excellent *Shadow Complex* for Xbox Live Arcade, *Infinity Blade* uses the Unreal Engine 3 to push the iPhone processor to unseen visual levels, delivering stunning character models and environmental architecture. And unlike many of the other more robust releases on iPhone, *Infinity Blade* isn't a hollow knock-off of an existing franchise. The combat-oriented quest offers a refreshing new approach, wherein your sword-wielding warrior's quest is assumed by your son years after you fall, until one of your descendants finally topples the powerful God-King.

Reviewers responded to *Infinity Blade*'s early December release with near-universal praise. But more notable than the high

scores are the proclamations of *Infinity Blade*'s immediate impact on the future of the App Store. "*Infinity Blade* is a turning point for iOS gaming," says Ryan Rigney for *GamePro*. "Epic has proven that Apple's popular mobile devices are capable of much more than what we've previously seen, and since they're now licensing their engine out for other developers to use, we're going to start seeing a lot of other games with *Infinity Blade*'s level of polish."

In his review for *Paste Magazine*, Kirk Hamilton wonders whether *Infinity Blade*'s release will challenge the App Store status quo when it comes to aping familiar concepts. "The game looks and plays so well," he writes, "that competing iOS action-game developers like the knockoff-kings at Gameloft are likely batten down the hatches and bracing for their first real fight."

But *Edge Magazine* isn't so quick to call *Infinity Blade* the game that will change the mobile focus on more casual experiences.

"It's tempting to see Epic's arrival on iOS... either calling time on the scrappy bedroom ingenuity of the iPhone marketplace or heralding a strange new era in which big-budget action games compete for space on the touch-screen with treasure hunts, tile puzzles, and physics toys," reads the 8-out-of-10 staff review. "It's equally possible, of course, that it's too late, even for the might of both the Unreal Engine and this heftiest of studios, to make too much of a dent in the App Store at all."

But *Infinity Blade* and any successors arrive at a turning point in the portable market, wherein sub-\$10 mobile games appear more ready than ever to compete with pricier physical releases on the upcoming Nintendo 3DS and the recently announced "NGP" PSP successor. Whether they'll help turn the tide away from dedicated handheld game systems remains to be seen, though the impending battle will no doubt be as calculated and exciting as those found in Epic's iOS hit. —Andrew Hayward

#### THE BOTTOM LINE

Report Card: Undertow (XBLA): 76 ||||| Shadow Complex (XBLA): 88





## State of the System: PlayStation 3

### UPCOMING PS3 GAMES

1. Yakuza 4
2. Dungeon Siege III
3. Crysis 2
4. Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars
5. L.A. Noire

### BEST-SELLING PS3

1. Call of Duty: Black Ops
2. Sports Champions
3. Gran Turismo 5
4. Madden NFL 11
5. Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood

\*According to VGChartz.com.

### Overheard on Twitter

Kevin Butler (@thekev-inbutler): I resolve to do something SHE wants to do. Like watch me play Uncharted 2 again. #NewYearsGamertlutions

### What's Kept Us Playing

#### Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood

I'm still playing *Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood* on an almost nightly basis, but I've lost my taste for some of the side missions and quests. I'm no longer chasing after The Truth puzzles, as it's become a drag to have to scour the buildings; I also stopped caring about getting 100 percent sync on every mission. I think, having invested somewhere in the neighborhood of a 100 hours into the three games combined, I've become a bit fatigued by the formula. I'll probably finish all of the Romulus missions just to get the armor, and I still really like sending out recruited assassins on missions, but I think I'm going to try and beat the main campaign as soon as I can so I can move on to another game. —Tae K. Kim



#### LittleBigPlanet 2

Gamers who just want a quirky platformer need look no further than *LittleBigPlanet 2*, Media Molecule's second outing for the lovable Sackboy. But for those who embraced the original game's "play, create, share" message, *LBP2* has a virtually endless amount of content waiting within the game's new personalized level hub (<http://lbp.me>). Here, *LBP* fans can browse tons of levels and even drill down through search options like "recently published" or "most hearted." Media Molecule is quick to praise well-made user levels as well, as the developer uses a column on the hub to highlight their favorite community-created levels. And what *LBP* community member could pass up playing levels when they have titles like "Unhearted: Drake's Misfortune 2"? —Andy Burt

### What We've Gone Back To

#### Crash Bandicoot (PSN)

I'm not quite sure what exactly possessed me one morning to purchase the first game in Sony's *Crash Bandicoot* series. Regardless of the reason, I'm glad I downloaded the classic game for PS3 via the PlayStation Network. *Crash Bandicoot* actually turned me on to 3D platformers when it came out on the original PlayStation, as I hadn't really played many aside from *Super Mario 64*. While definitely a simple pleasure, the game holds up surprisingly well and does offer a fair amount of challenge after you plow through the first 10 or so levels. But god, that music is atrocious. ProTip: Mute the game to avoid throbbing headaches. I've actually been playing *Crash Bandicoot* in between *Dead Space 2* sessions after becoming overwhelmed (and devoured) by hordes of those bastard Necromorphs. —Patrick Shaw





## DJ Hero

I didn't play *DJ Hero* the first time around. And I didn't play it the second time around, either. But when I saw a discarded DJ controller lying in the *GamePro* review room a few weeks ago, I thought I'd give both games a spin. And I'm glad I did. The first game isn't bad, but the second version is actually pretty well designed. While I didn't feel like a real DJ—I've been spinning the wheels of steel in real life for longer than I care to mention, and that makes me a bit snobby toward this plastic rendition of DJing—I did find the hand-to-eye-to-ear coordination action rewarding and fun on a basic gaming level. The music's pretty damn good on the whole, and some of the mashups are quite grin-inducing in their ingenuity. At its original price, *DJ Hero 2* was a bit on the expensive side, but now I'm seeing used controllers and games lurking in the corners of gaming stores. With minty fresh boxes being heavily discounted, I think it's a pretty good deal if you like this kind of music. —Jaz Rignall



## What's Taken Over Our Lives

### Dead Nation

I'm vowing to take a break from *Dead Nation* soon as I've completed the single-player campaign twice and the co-op campaign once. I played through the solo game a second time in order to max out the weapon upgrades on my favorite zombie-slaying tools: the shotgun, the flame thrower, the submachine gun, and the electricity gun. While I'm nowhere near unlocking all the PS3 trophies, I am starting to feel like there's little left to do in *Dead Nation*. I'm still holding out hope the game will eventually receive new missions via downloadable content. Hell, I'm not giving up hope on the outside chance that they'll make a *Dead Nation 2*. But maybe I should just quit. My girlfriend's on the brink of flinging the PS3 down the stairwell in my apartment complex from all the nonstop zombie howls and gunfire. —Patrick Shaw



## What Gives You Bang For Your Buck



### Sly Cooper Collection

Before they created the superhero sandbox adventure *Infamous*, Sucker Punch Productions were known for one of the PS2's most celebrated platforming series: *Sly Cooper*. Three titles came out for the PS2 between 2002 and 2005, but once the *Infamous* series took off, fans of *Sly Cooper* weren't left with much hope for another sequel. Fortunately, Sony's updated and remastered all three titles, released as *The Sly Collection*, and the series' action-packed adventures hold up just as well today as they did back when the PS2 was in its heyday. This collection is a steal at \$39.99, and considering the amount of work Sony put into remastering these three titles, *The Sly Collection* is pretty hard to pass up. —Andy Burt





## State of the System: Xbox 360

### UPCOMING 360 GAMES

1. Gears of War 3
2. L.A. Noire
3. Crysis 2
4. Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars
5. The Next Halo

### BEST-SELLING 360

1. Kinect Adventures
2. Call of Duty: Black Ops
3. Kinect Sports
4. Dance Central
5. Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood

\*According to VGChartz.com

### Overheard on Twitter

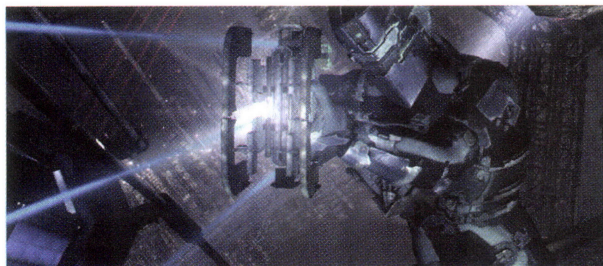
Rare Ltd (@rareLtd): Blast Corps again. How dare they disrespect the plot! RT @AndrewG00910 franchises in need of a next-gen revival: <http://exm.nr/hGdtmz>



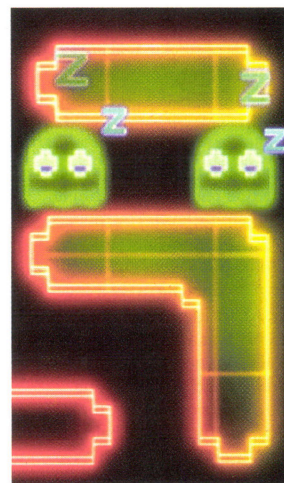
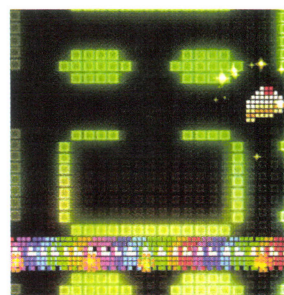
### What's Kept Us Playing

#### Dead Space 2

I was lucky enough to score the review assignment for this game over the holiday break. I had a week off and nothing to do but sit around and play video games. It was pretty awesome. By the time you read this, I'll have gotten my hands on the retail version and will have beaten the game three times (twice on a debug system for review purposes, and once on my retail system for the achievements), and I'll probably have logged some serious time into the multiplayer mode, where I probably will have spent most of my time running around as one of those weird grey screech babies. I will probably have also waged several wars over Twitter and GamePro's comment system trying to counteract the "It's not as scary as the first one" naysayers. Read my review on GamePro.com for why this shouldn't be a concern. —Tae K. Kim



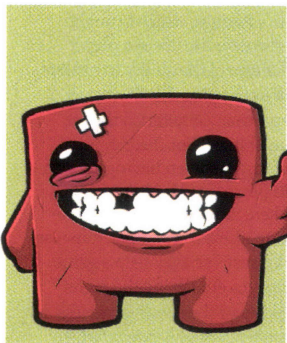
Like Tae, I've also been sucked into *Dead Space 2*. I've butchered my way through roughly two-thirds of Visceral's sci-fi horror sequel, and now I'm actually starting to slow down my playthrough, scouring *The Sprawl* for hidden credits and energy, in order to savor *Dead Space 2*'s final harrowing moments. The game focuses a bit more on throwing more explosions and action sequences at the player than the first game, but it somehow manages to keep the game's suspense and scares intact. I'd liken it to James Cameron's *Aliens*, which places a heavier emphasis on action than Ridley Scott's original *Alien*. But on its own, *Dead Space 2* has no shortage of bowel-loosening moments of pure terror. I still can't shake the heebie-jeebies I got the first time a throng of undead toddler monstrosities sprang from the shadows and attacked me. —Patrick Shaw



#### Pac-Man Championship Edition: DX

Ah! Good old Pac-Man. Older than gaming dirt, but, I'm pleased to say, still providing thrills and spills some 30 years after first arriving in a wardrobe-sized cabinet that had an endless appetite for your quarters. While the evergreen (or should that be everyyellow?) character's games have ebbed and flowed over the years, the pie-shaped chap has hit what I'd say is the highest high since his arrival back in 1980. *Pac-Man Championship Edition: DX* hits a sweet spot by simply tapping into the old-school competitive nature of high-scoring and boosting the basic *Pac-Man* gameplay into something fast, furious, competitive, and highly addictive. It's simple. It's bright and colorful. It's timeless. And it keeps me coming back over and over again for a quick blast. Indeed, at this point I think it's my most obsessively played Xbox 360 game yet. —Jaz Rignall





### Super Meat Boy

It would seem strange at first to refer to a platformer so steeped in nostalgic 8-bit glory as "iPhone-esque," but if you look at the progression design of both *SMB* and many popular iPhone games (like *Angry Birds* and *Cut the Rope*), you'll see that both have quite a lot in common...meaning they're both extremely addictive. *Super Meat Boy* constantly pushes you to score better than your buddies on each stage, and managing to get through some of the later stages under the set times is agonizingly difficult. But that won't stop us from trying. It's really great game design from the standpoint of what's going to keep people pushing to get better scores, shorter times, etc. And what better way to try and one-up your friends than by massacring a tiny cube of meat? —Andy Burt



### Most Sickeningly Sweet XBLA Game

#### Ilomilo

Moments after booting up SouthEnd Interactive's cutesy puzzler *Ilomilo*, I about had a heart attack caused by saccharine overdose. At its heart, *Ilomilo* is a puzzler that puts a huge emphasis on spatial reasoning, but you'd be forgiven for initially writing it off as a kiddie-aimed *Teletubbies*-esque game. Everything from the menus and the music to the mushy story about two friends that need to reconnect with each other oozes sugary sweetness, but despite all that, the game's puzzles are amazingly fresh and extremely challenging. It's a bit of a gaming paradox on paper, but once you get into the meat of the game, it's very hard to put it down. Whatever you do though, don't get those cute little songs in your head—they'll be stuck there for days. —Andy Burt



### What's Lost Our Interest

#### Dead Rising: Case West

It seemed like a no-miss proposition—after the success of *Dead Rising 2* lead-in *Case Zero*, the epilogue was going to supplement weapons craftsman and *Dead Rising 2* hero Chuck Greene with the long-anticipated return of photojournalist and smartass Frank West. While this standalone \$10 XBLA game does just that, the game's mechanics have been tempered in such a way that *West* goes south almost immediately. The bio-lab setting is boring, and the samey rooms are difficult to navigate, while each hero's power—Greene's weapon-crafting and West's photography—aren't as fun to utilize this time around. The tag-teaming isn't even all that great, since West is only playable if you're the second player tagging along with someone online, and the ability to escort survivors has been excised. As a die-hard *Dead Rising* fan who's played through all four of the Xbox 360 adventures, I really hope Capcom can bring the next *Dead Rising* back to respectability. —Dave Rudden







## State of the System: Wii & DS

### UPCOMING WII GAMES

1. The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
2. Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars
3. Driver: San Francisco
4. Lego Pirates of the Caribbean
5. X-Men: Destiny

### BEST-SELLING WII

1. Just Dance 2
2. Wii Sports 2
3. New Super Mario Bros. Wii
4. Wii Sports Resort
5. Donkey Kong Country Returns

\*According to VGChartz.com

### Overheard on Twitter

Steve "King of Kong" Wiebe (@stevewiebedk): "I want to congratulate Hank Chien on reclaiming the Donkey Kong record with an amazing score of 1,068,000 points. Way to go Hank!"

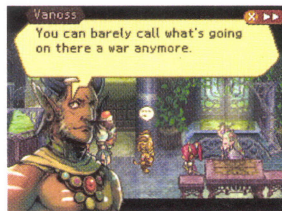
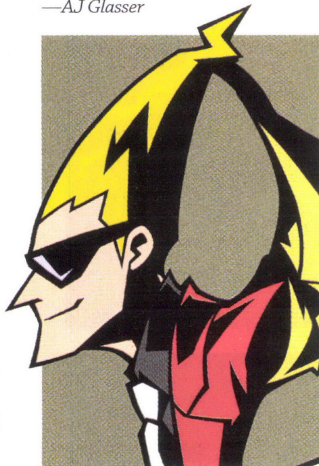


### What's Kept Us Playing

#### Ghost Trick (DS)

*Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective* doesn't ring my bell like *Professor Layton* does, but I love a good puzzler with a murder mystery. This particular Nintendo DS video game from Capcom reminds me of a *Law & Order* episode by kicking things off with a murder in the first 3 minutes. Add to that some snazzy localized dialogue and a re-roll button and I'm set. Mind your rage-quits, though—all of *Ghost Trick's* cut-scenes are unskippable.

—AJ Glasser



#### Alt-Play: The Jason Rohrer Anthology (DS)

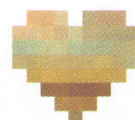
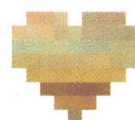
This game is a great example of how artistic games can start to break into mainstream methods of game sales. Sure, titles like *Limbo* and *Braid* have delivered a deeper message in terms of story, but the games still play out in the same linear way. *Alt-Play: The Jason Rohrer Anthology* brings a trio of experimental games that play out unlike any other titles I've experienced before. First, there's *Passage*, which brought me through the life of a player and tempers the ability to explore against the time I had with my life-partner. *Gravitation* is a bit more oblique, but the game's wavering between having tremendous power, suddenly becoming blocked, and then needing to return to a source of inspiration was the closest I've ever seen a game coming to emulating the highs and lows of the creative process. I haven't yet tried *Between*, which utilizes local-only multiplayer, but as far as I'm concerned, I've had enough unique and enlightening experiences with *The Jason Rohrer Anthology* to justify the \$2 the game costs in the DSiWare shop.

—Dave Rudden

#### Radiant Historia (DS)

My time as a 16-bit-era gamer was dominated by lots and lots of console RPGs, namely Square, Sega, and Enix titles, and I still view that to be one of my most cherished eras of gaming. That could also help explain my recent fascination with a little DS RPG called *Radiant Historia*, which incorporates many elements of my favorite RPGs of the 16-bit era into one new yet seemingly retro game. That isn't to say that the game itself is unoriginal; even hardcore Japanese RPG aficionados will notice that *Radiant Historia* does a great job of not taking too much from any one game. It blends many elements together (adding a few of its own twists) for a truly special experience.

—Andy Burt





## What We've Gone Back To

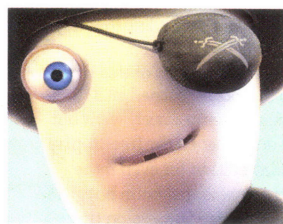


### The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks (DS)

A bit of insight to my pick—at the time I'm writing this, the Nintendo DS is in a bit of a holding pattern. We just learned of the 3DS's launch plan, and we're still a few weeks away from the highly anticipated *Okamiden* and just a few months away from Nintendo's next portable platform. While some early 2011 DS wares have been entertaining, I've been jonesing for a full-length adventure on the DS, and *Spirit Tracks* has been filling the void quite nicely. While I'd still prefer a wide-open overworld, the train navigation is leagues better than the sea travel that turned me off of *Wind Waker* and *Phantom Hourglass*. And the possession gameplay that it introduces works wonders with the stylus and forces me to think through puzzle/action sequences in a way that no other *Zelda* game has. Most tellingly, I'm sticking with the game despite that it commits my cardinal DS sin and makes me interact with the microphone while I'm on the bus when I have to blow wind into dungeon-ship sails. —Dave Rudden



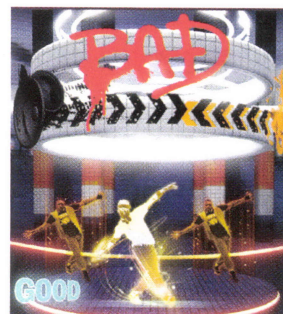
## What's Lost Our Interest



### Raving Rabbids: Time in Travel (Wii)

I took home this game in the hope that it might provide some drunken silly gaming, and through the fuzzy warmness of beer goggles, it sort of did. But in the cold light of day, sober and slightly hung over, I wanted to do nothing but slip away quietly, mildly embarrassed for making a fool of myself the night before. While *Travel in Time* is obviously aimed at kids, I was disappointed that it doesn't quite have the fun factor and humor of prior Rabbids minigame compilations, which are more universally appealing. The games are simply not as well designed, and I think that's obvious whether you're a kid or an adult. I definitely liked earlier games, and they proved quite a hit with my inebriated chums; this time around the Rabbids just didn't set the party alight. —Jaz Rignall

## Love It for All the Wrong Reasons



### Micheal Jackson: The Experience (Wii)

OK, I'll admit it—I took home *Michael Jackson: The Experience* because I thought it'd provide a good laugh for my cynical chums, and indeed, myself. And I was not disappointed. Like a poor-quality "B" movie that's so bad it's good, the Prince of Pop's appearance as dancing monkey avatar for the masses provides a beautifully broad platform for a million jokes, comments, and fun-poking. As a game, it's unfortunately not very well designed, often requiring little more than arm-wafting to progress through the game's 20 classic tunes. But add a dose of cynical adults with an evil sense of humor, and *Michael* is an ice-breaker that will bring your party to life for all the wrong reasons. The poor guy must be spinning in his grave. —Jaz Rignall





## State of the System: Mobile

### UPCOMING MOBILE GAMES

1. Warm Gun
2. Angry Birds 2
3. Resident Evil: Mercenaries Vs.
4. Final Fantasy Tactics: War of The Lions
5. Smuggle Truck

### BEST-SELLING MOBILE

1. Angry Birds
2. Fruit Ninja
3. Burn the Rope
4. Cut the Rope
5. The Game of Life

\*According to iTunes

### Overheard on Twitter

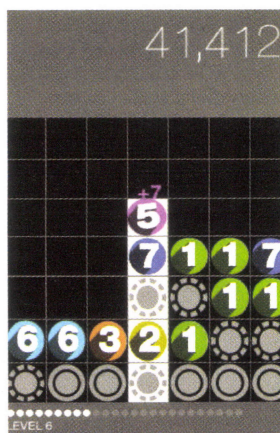
PopCap Games (@popcap\_games): "From Gwyneth Paltrow's GOOP: 'Kid-dies...playing Plants vs. Zombies on the iPad, their obsession that I have to limit like crazy!'"



### What's Kept Us Playing

#### ● Cut the Rope

Chillingo has earned quite the reputation for their fiendishly addictive iOS catalog of touchscreen games, and this sugar-sweetened, physics-based puzzler ranks right up there with their hardest to put down. It's a simple enough premise: Candy sits on the end of a rope, and in order to get it into the obnoxiously adorable Om Nom's mouth, you maneuver it across your iDevice by way of cranks, air bubbles, cushions, and with the advent of later updates, even the act of bending gravity to your will. I've cleared the entirety of *Cut the Rope's* (as of this writing) five boxes, earned all 375 stars, and immediately went out and downloaded the free-to-play holiday edition for even more saccharine-coated brain bogglers. It's a pint-sized obsession that's more than made my morning commute to the *GamePro* office bearable. —Will Herring



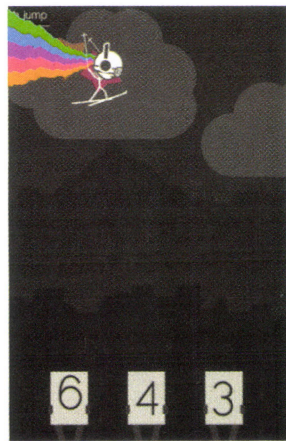
#### ● Drop7

I try not to buy a lot of apps on my iPhone because that's one addiction I don't need in my life—some of you know how fast that stuff can add up—but I bought *Drop7*, a simple puzzler from Areacodeinc, after seeing a lot of chatter about it on Twitter, and I got hopelessly addicted. It's hard to explain, but it's sort of like a combination of *Tetris* and *sudoku*: You have circular tiles with numbers inside that get eliminated from the board when their row or column is the same length as that number. It also has gray tiles that you must break open. Like every good puzzle game, it's simple to pick up but difficult to master. Best of all, it has no timer, so you can think about each move at your leisure. I play it any time I have a few minutes to kill, like during commercials and when I'm on the bus. The only thing is, those few minutes can sometimes turn into an hour or two or three. —Tae K. Kim



#### ● Solipskier

*Solipskier* takes the tried-and-true *Line Rider* concept and optimizes the gameplay for the iPhone. Learning how the game works takes about 2 seconds, and soon you'll be skiing with the best of them. The game is fairly simple—use one of your fingers to draw the track for your skier, lifting your finger to signal jumps and leading him through gates. As your skier gets closer to gates, the height at which they'll appear is highlighted on the right side of the screen. In a similar fashion to indie darling *Canabalt*, *Solipskier* gets progressively more and more difficult, and just when you think you're doing great, some awful hazard befalls your poor skier. That's what makes *Solipskier* so addicting, as it constantly urges you to try again. And you will. —Andy Burt







### 🎨 Graffiti Ball

From Backflip Studios, the brains behind such relentlessly addicting mobile video games like *Ragdoll Blaster* and *Paper Toss*, comes this simple pleasure where you guide a little ball across stages by spray-painting multicolored paths and ramps in front of it. *Graffiti Ball*, like many of Backflip Studios' puzzle-based games, requires players to rely on physics and their wits to figure out the quickest way to get the ball to the goal. Some stages prove to be more frustrating than rewarding, but in *Graffiti Ball* you can actually erase and repaint portions of your colorful graffiti paths, which allows you to slowly piece together tracks that work (as opposed to failing over and over again until you get it right). —Patrick Shaw

### 🗑️ What We Deleted

#### 🌿 Smurfs' Village

*Smurfs' Village* started out like a *FarmVille*/80s cartoon orgy, but in about two days, I had wiped it from my iPhone. The game is just too disjointed between shake-the-hell-out-of-your-phone mini-games like Papa Smurf's potion mixer and bland farming sims that take too long to build experience points. I did get a kick out of all the complaints about microtransactions on iTunes, though—I swear the game warned me 50 times before I tried to buy Smurfberries with real money. No idea how parents completely missed that crucial part of *Smurfs' Village* gameplay. Some highlights from iTunes customer reviews include such comments as "Rip Off!" and "Beware!" and "Smurfberries for \$100? Are you out of your mind?" —AJ Glasser



### ☀️ What Surprised Us



#### 🌑 Dead Space

EA has performed a small miracle with *Dead Space* for the iPhone. While previous console games brought to Apple's portable have completely altered the gameplay (like *Metal Gear Solid Touch*) or watered down the format of the fully featured games (like *Dead Rising*), *Dead Space* emulates the console experience so closely that it's instantly become the standard-bearer of graphics and control for an iPhone game. Granted, the game's not quite at PS3/Xbox 360 levels (I'd liken it to a really great-looking PS2/Xbox game), but *Dead Space* on the iPhone matches the console experience where it counts, uncannily mapping the controls to the touchscreen and keeping the stream of enemies steady, as well as delivering the same deep story and arsenal of dismemberment-friendly weapons. With the new console game, the PS3-bonus *Extraction*, and this downloadable gem, *Dead Space* fans have a heap of gaming riches this month. —Dave Rudden





## State of the System: PC

### UPCOMING PC GAMES

1. *Dragon Age II*
2. *Portal 2*
3. *Darkspore*
4. *Hunted: The Demon's Forge*
5. *World of Tanks*

### BEST-SELLING PC

1. *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*
2. *Call of Duty: Black Ops*
3. *Lego Universe*
4. *Assassin's Creed*
5. *F12010*

\*According to December 2010 GamesDownloads.com sales figures.

### Overheard on Twitter

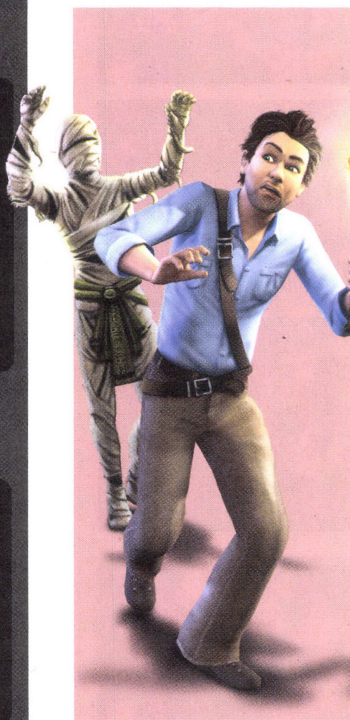
@gizmogladstone (Darren Gladstone) In playing DCUO on a new (unnamed) PC, I find myself grabbing the gamepad for combat, and jabbing a touchscreen for the quirky menu system.

## What's Kept Us Playing

### The Sims 3: World Adventures

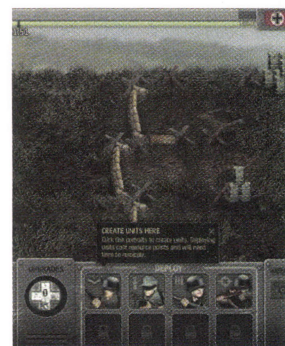
After a holiday-driven stint in *The Sims 3*, I turned my attention back to the *World Adventures* expansion pack to complete the magic boulder-moving hammer quest. I've had plenty of Sims with high enough visa levels, but I've never had a single Sim I wanted to take through all of the quests to get the hammer. Luckily, "Tynan Johnson" seems up to the challenge, because I started him off as a Brave, Disciplined, Daredevil teen and grew him into an Adventurous, Athletic type equipped to box mummies. Oh, and he's had four wives—one from each country—with a couple of kids by each.

—AJ Glasser



### Dragon Age: Origins

Back in September, I started a fresh game with the expansion and all of the DLC loaded up and ready to go. I hadn't played this since the expansion *Awakenings* came out, so I'm eager to see how it all comes together as one gaming work. Then *Civilization V* hit, pushing *Dragon Age* (and all my other PC games) to the background. But I need a *Civ* break, so after I dismantled Gandhi, I'm returned to Felerden and see how the story plays out for a female City Elf Rogue and finish the side-quests that I couldn't complete in my first playthrough. The world of *Dragon Age* may feel a little "borrowed" from the works of George R.R. Martin, but the level of tactical control the game gives you over your characters in combat, the enjoyable magic system, and strong character development epitomize what's great (and sadly, what's disappearing) in PC RPG design. —Jason Wilson



### Warfare 1944

Armor Games' World War II strategy game *Warfare 1944* might not redefine the potential of browser-based games, but it sure is a hell of a lot of fun. The game's premise is simple: As either the U.S. or the German Wehrmacht, players face off against enemy A.I. on a battlefield while managing resources, maintaining soldiers' morale, and upgrading units (*Warfare 1944* includes grenadiers, tanks, snipers, and other units). While the description of this game might sound a tad generic, I assure you that it's one of the more engrossing war sims of its kind. And if you grow tired of *Warfare 1944*, you can also check out its predecessor, *Warfare 1917*, which plays similarly to 1944, only it takes place during World War I. —Patrick Shaw



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## What We Can't Wait For



## Dungeons

I've been playing with the preview build of *Dungeons* for the last few weeks, and I'm digging this modern spin on one of my favorite game series of the 1990s: *Dungeon Keeper*. Developed by European publisher Kalypso, *Dungeons* throws you into the role of a diabolical dungeon lord. You build your deathtrap of a dungeon to attract heroes, and it's important that you give them plenty of loot, libraries, and other things that make them happy—because when you kill them, you use their happiness to boost your powers for dungeon-making mayhem. The game also gives you a number of goals (such as finding a way to tunnel into a wizard's cellar) in addition to the fun of slaughtering unwary adventurers. I get a kick of each time an adventure stops to pick up loot from a treasure chest, knowing that after he fills up his loot bag to his heart's content, I'll be lurking in a nearby corridor, waiting to hack him into bits. —Jason Wilson

OMG!

## I'm Playing a MMO?

### Rift

I've never been into MMOs; I don't care for multiplayer games, and I really don't like having to meet a group of players at a prescribed time in order to game. But I'm astounded that I'm digging *Rift* after its beta events. It's nice to see a faction setup that's not on the good/evil alignment axis; the Guardians and the Defiant both want to help heal Telera—they just disagree on how to heal it. The game's class structure focuses on "souls" that you can add to customize your character (depending on your level, you may have up to three; right now, my Guardian is a Warlock/Necromancer). And the game's dynamic events—*Rift* invasions—are a blast to tackle with other players, whether you're part of a group or just a gaggle of wandering heroes looking for something to do. —Jason Wilson



X

## What's Lost Our Interest

### Facebook Games

*FarmVille*, *FrontierVille*, *Texas Hold'Em*, *Cafe World*, *Ravenwood Fair*, *CityVille*—you name it... they're dead to me. There's a lot of variety in Facebook games on the surface, and they can certainly scratch that "collect and build" itch. But in the end they're all the same: too light on substance, too early to pressure you to spend money, and almost entirely devoid of interesting decision-making. I've never been one to subscribe to the idea that Facebook games aren't "real games" and should be avoided by gamers, but it really is high time they step it up a notch. Wake me up when the *Civilization* Facebook game launches later this year. —Jason Cross





## BULLET POINTS

*We've boiled down GamePro.com's most notable reviews into tasty bite-sized nuggets of goodness.*

**Mass Effect 2 (PS3)**

"...The PS3 version of Mass Effect 2 is a very good port of one of my favorite games of 2010."

**PROS:** Very solid port; interactive comic provides a fine alternative to playing the original game; DLC works seamlessly with the main quest.

**CONS:** Almost visually identical to the 360 build; streamlined gameplay will likely put off traditional RPG enthusiasts.

★★★★★

**Iloilo (360)**

"...It's an endearing, thought-provoking, and addictive puzzler. And with a selection of bonus mini-games and a well-balanced co-op mode, gamers are sure to get their money's worth."

**PROS:** Well-designed puzzles; beautiful settings; excellent use of 3D effect.

**CONS:** Pacing is a bit uneven; camera can be wonky at times.

★★★★★

**Dead Space 2 (PS3/360)**

"As a gaming experience it's pretty awesome, and it has a lot to offer over the course of the 9 hours it takes to reach the end."

**PROS:** Tweaks like the Advanced Locator make it much more fun to play; the evolution of Issac is handled nicely; action fits into the trademark *Dead Space* mold.

**CONS:** A noticeable lack of major moments; boss fights are fairly weak; not enough in the way of plot developments or answers to major questions.

★★★★★

**Kung Fu Live (PS3)**

"...It's a surprisingly successful motion-controlled beat-em-up that will entertain you, and anyone who happens to be watching you, for quite a few hours."

**PROS:** May help some gamers get back into shape; enjoyable aesthetic and vibe; an innovative approach to beat-em-up gaming.

**CONS:** Learning curve with the controls; requires a ton of space to move around; multiplayer isn't very robust.

★★★★★

**Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective (DS)**

"The conclusion the plot hurries you toward may not be one you saw coming, but the satisfaction of getting there cancels out the frustration of working out the tougher puzzles."

**PROS:** Interesting story; excellent animation; well-localized dialogue is actually funny.

**CONS:** Some levels involve more waiting than puzzling; cut-scenes are unskippable; story gets preachy toward the end.

★★★★★

**Back to the Future: It's About Time (PC)**

"...Telltale has done an amazing job replicating the audio and visual elements of the trilogy while telling a good story, which has the potential to get even better."

**PROS:** A suitable follow-up to the classic trilogy; excellent voice-acting and score; puzzles are clever without being confusing.

**CONS:** The new characters are a bit bland; Hill Valley is claustrophobically small; some annoying anachronisms.

★★★★★

**Battlefield: Bad Company 2—Vietnam (PS3/360)**

"...It's limited without feeling restricted, and at no point will you feel like there isn't enough content to keep you coming back."

**PROS:** It's more *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*, with a new look, slightly adjusted feel, and excellent new arenas; awesome new era-exclusive weapons.

**CONS:** Spawn-camping is a huge issue, and seasoned players won't earn any unlockables; music is repeated far too often.

★★★★★

**Lost in Shadow (Wii)**

"...It sets itself apart from like-minded platformers with a dreamy, meditative style and innovative gameplay."

**PROS:** Mind-bending game mechanic; beautifully stylized; accessible for all kinds of gamers.

**CONS:** Finicky controls and combat system; brainless puzzles; generic platforming under the packaging.

★★★★★

**Super Mario All-Stars (Wii)**

"...There are other ways to experience each of these games that are much friendlier to your wallet, but only if you're willing to forgo the nostalgic flourishes."

**PROS:** Some of the greatest games of all time; multiple saves for each game; Lost Levels' continue system is friendlier than its counterpart on the Virtual Console.

**CONS:** You can buy each game on the Virtual Console for less; some don't control as well as their original versions; would benefit from a more robust selection of bonus material.

★★★★★

**Kingdom Hearts Re:coded (DS)**

"...It has a decent amount of polish and should be interesting for series fans who have managed to keep the story straight so far."

**PROS:** Decent graphics; interesting leveling system; plenty of extra challenges and quests; unique Matrix System adds replay value.

**CONS:** Terrible camera; irritating platforming sections; too much recycled content; convoluted story.

★★★★★

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# 10 YEARS AGO IN GAMEPRO

OUR  
FEBRUARY  
2001  
ISSUE



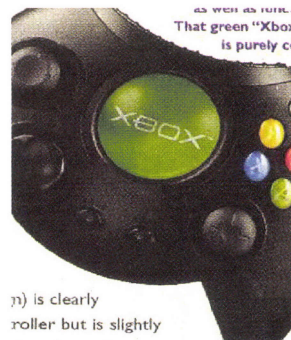
## Nifty 150

To celebrate the 150th issue of *GamePro*, the editors compiled a list of the "The Greatest 15 Games of All Time." Besides having a grammatically awkward name, the list has a few questionable omissions in the form of *Metal Gear Solid* and *Resident Evil*, and it perhaps has one or two sports games too many, like *NBA Jam*, *Madden 2001*, *NHL '94*, and *Virtua Tennis*. And as much as we enjoyed *Street Fighter II Turbo: Hyper Fighting*, it's certainly no *Zelda*-killer.



## They Took Our Jobs!

Instead of the cursory two-sentence reply most magazines throw to readers who ask "How I can get a job like yours," the *GamePro* editors provided a bit more insight into how to get a job among the video-game media ranks. Surprisingly, most of the information and advice is still applicable today—yes, we still rarely get to play games on the job, and yes, amassing a portfolio of work online will put you ahead of the competition when we look over résumés.



## Enter the Xbox

The Microsoft Xbox appeared for the first time in the March 2001 issue. Aside from the anemic first titles revealed (including *WWF Raw is War* and the long-forgotten *Malice*), the first look at the system's hardware was a bit off, too. The original Xbox "Duke" controller was the recipient of an inordinate amount of praise, with the story citing that "comfort is clearly evident" in the controller that was "form-fitting for an adult hand." Who wrote that? Sasquatch?

# 20 YEARS AGO IN GAMEPRO

OUR  
FEBRUARY  
1991  
ISSUE



## Slipping a Mickey

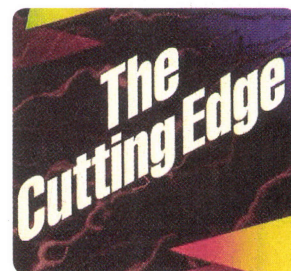
The iconic cover image of Mickey Mouse was a little bit misleading. Our 6-page feature on upcoming games based on comics and cartoons contained a little under a single page of content featuring the legendary rodent. To put it in context, the NES game based on *The Noid*—the former Domino's Pizza mascot—received almost as much coverage.

With a turbo lap, you 1G-16 diehards can somehow subversive—what's your problem sales (read "ads") butter our bread, just flat if you get the best gaming for your buck. You're having FUN, then in the long run we say to get the best gaming when buying tin. Write us. We'd like to hear about the creative get their gaming in without going to the p...



## Recession 1.0

The Editor's Letter for our March 1991 issue treads familiar ground. Spurred by the recession of the early '90s, the *GamePro* staff presented a few cash-saving tips for thrifty gamers. Some suggestions are still cogent today (like trading with friends), while others are rarely recommended—pooling money with friends to buy games seems like a recipe for acrimonious separation settlements.



## SNES's First Wave

The almost year-long wait between the Super Nintendo's launch in Japan and the United States allowed for some preliminary looks at launch software. Some of the reveals weren't translated quite right (Mario's prehistoric pal is referred to as "Yossie the dragon"), and some games didn't quite live up to the hype (we touted *Final Fight* as having "every level and move," though it lacked co-op), but getting glimpses of the likes of *Super Mario World* and *F-Zero* were likely worth the minor gaffes.

auf wiedersehen



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